Middle East Forum

Reports

Beachhead: Georgetown U.

How Foreign and Domestic Radical Actors Captured a U.S. University

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Middle East Forum

Georgetown, Harvard and Cambridge officials pose in London with their benefactors: senior representatives of the terror-tied Safa Network, a Virginia-based collection of for-profit and non-profit institutions tied to Hamas, Palestininan Islamic Jihad and the Muslim Brotherhood. Safa arranged and managed Saudi Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal's funding of Islamic studies centers at major Western universities

Executive Summary

Over the past three decades, malign foreign influence actors from Qatar, Turkey, and Malaysia have entrenched themselves at Georgetown University, using the institution's campuses in Washington, D.C. and Doha as bases to propagate Islamist ideology, train sympathetic academics and diplomats, and fundamentally reshape Middle East and Islamic studies.

Table of Contents

- Executive Summary
  - Key Findings
    - Turkey
    - Qatar
    - Malaysia
- The Safa Network
- Georgetown University and the Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding
- Key Staff at the ACMCU
- John Esposito and the Safa Network
- Esposito, Safa, and the World and Islam Studies Enterprise

Network, a Virginia-based web of interlinked charities, businesses, and think tanks run by a small group of powerful Islamist voices tied to violent foreign regimes, extremist movements and terrorist financing networks.

- International Islamist Axis
  - Qatar
  - Turkey
    - Center for Islam and Global Affairs
  - Malaysia
- Chart and Data
- Implications and Significance
- Policy Recommendations
- Appendix I: Safa Network Organizations Subset
- References

Key Findings

- This report focuses on the **Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding (ACMCU)**, an institution based at Georgetown's Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service. **ACMCU, this report finds, was established, developed, funded, and staffed by the terror-tied Safa Network.**

- The Safa Network, which controls hundreds of millions of dollars of assets and was previously the subject of a federal terror finance investigation, today **works to homogenize Muslim communities, theocratize education, and propagate Islamist ideology. Federal agents previously investigated the Safa Network over its links to Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and other terrorist organizations**.

- In 2005, members of Congress and journalists reported, with alarm, that the Saudi Arabian billionaire **Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal** gave $20 million to Georgetown. However, this **report shows that Safa officials and their adult children arranged and oversaw the Saudi donation.** Safa officials connected ACMCU and Georgetown's leaders to Bin Talal; Safa officials established and controlled the charitable trust that allocated the Saudi royal's funds to ACMCU; and Safa officials were present for the signing of agreements.

- ACMCU head **John Esposito** was aware of Safa officials' control of the funding arrangement with Georgetown, later boasting of receiving checks directly from top Safa official **Jamal Barzinji**.

- Safa's control over academic centers is not limited to Georgetown. Muna AbuSulayman and two other Safa operatives were inserted into the "management committee" of other university departments funded by Alwaleed Bin Talal. **In the late 2000s, the Safa Network seemingly acquired control of the charitable expenditures for Saudi Arabia's wealthiest billionaire and one of the richest men in the world.**

- While significant attention was paid to $30.3 million in funding from individuals and entities from Saudi Arabia given to Georgetown between 1997 and 2015, this figure is dwarfed by Qatar's grants and contracts with

- **Georgetown has received at least $4.4 million in funding between 1993 and 2024 directly from U.S. 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) organizations in the Safa Network**, according to IRS 990 tax reports.

- Over the past three decades, the small team at Georgetown's **Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding** has included at least **40 faculty and advisory members with some past or present role in the Safa network.**

- Four ACMCU faculty were involved with the **United Association for Studies and Research (UASR), a leading institution for Hamas in North America**. In fact, **Hamas senior advisor Ahmed Yousef was explicitly involved in an early Georgetown University research project named Project MAPS**, and the ACMCU hosted joint events with the UASR.

- **Badar Khan Suri** has been pictured embracing the late Hamas terror leader Ismail Haniyeh. Suri's father-in-law is a former senior Hamas official, and his wife is a Georgetown graduate student. In March 2025, Suri was arrested and faces deportation from the United States as a result of research conducted for this report.

- Another Safa-connected staff member, **Farhan Mujahid Chak**, a visiting research fellow at ACMCU, is involved with advocacy efforts for convicted members of terrorist groups such as Dukhtaran-e-Millat and Hizbul Mujahideen.

- Other ACMCU staff, tasked with training the next generations of academics and diplomats, openly express conspiracy theories, alongside anti-semitic and pro-terror rhetoric.

Collaborations with Authoritarian Regimes

Georgetown and ACMCU closely collaborate with three authoritarian Islamist regimes—**Turkey, Qatar, and Malaysia**—through partnerships facilitated or maintained by the Safa Network.

Turkey

- In Turkey, staff from ACMCU are involved with the Center for Islamic and Global Affairs, an entity backed by Islamist leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and led by deported **Sami Al-Arian**, a former leader in the Safa Network convicted of terrorist financing.

- Through 501(c) proxy organizations such as the Diyanet, the Turkish government funds activities at Georgetown, circumventing Section 117 reporting laws.
- Ten ACMCU faculty members or fellows are involved with the Turkish regime-backed Center for Islamic and Global Affairs, despite the terrorist activities of Sami Al-Arian, its founder.

Qatar

- Georgetown and ACMCU maintain close partnerships with the Qatar Foundation and Qatar's Hamad Bin Khalifa University, both funded by the government of Qatar.
- Qatari organizations, mostly government-controlled, have handed almost a billion dollars to Georgetown. Graduates of ACMCU and Georgetown's campus in Doha go on to work for the leading institutions of the terror-support Qatari government.
- Safa Network officials and their family members work for the Qatari regime, while seventeen ACMCU faculty or fellows, including Safa Network figures, are involved with Qatari regime organizations.

Malaysia

- In Malaysia, **Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim** is both a fellow at ACMCU and a prominent official in the Safa Network. The prime minister chairs Safa's IIIT, the Virginia network's flagship institution and a key partner of ACMCU. Ibrahim also helped build Safa's presence in the East, including the International Islamic University Malaysia, a Safa Network offshoot founded and operated by Safa officials.
- The International Islamic University Malaysia claims Ibrahim's rise is a product of the International Islamic University Malaysia and the IIIT's partnership, while claiming that "revivalist Islam" across the globe has been advanced by the "works of [ACMCU's] John Voll or John Esposito…"
- Seven ACMCU faculty or fellows have been involved with the International Islamic University Malaysia.

The Safa Network wields extraordinary influence over a major Western university, aligning it with an international Islamist axis and shaping Western foreign policy for decades. Through in top academic institutions, think tanks, international organizations, and federal departments and agencies.

The Safa Network

In 2001, senior special agent David Kane of the U.S. Customs Service joined federal investigators from the Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigation and the FBI to investigate a Virginia-based network suspected of financing Islamist terrorism. In a federal affidavit, Kane stated that this network, known interchangeably as the Safa Network or SAAR Network, was "suspected of providing material support to terrorists, money laundering, and tax evasion through the use of a variety of related for-profit companies and ostensible charitable entities under their control, most of which are located at 555 Grove Street, Herndon, Virginia."[1]

The Safa Network is a powerful collection of charities and businesses established in the 1980s. The lead Safa entity, the SAAR Foundation, was named after its founder, Sulaiman Abdul Aziz Al Rajhi, a prominent figure in Saudi Arabia's corporate and banking sectors. This sprawling network, comprising charities, businesses, educational organizations, think tanks, universities, and even a huge poultry business in Georgia,[2] collectively manage billions of dollars of assets.

In March 2002, federal agents raided over a dozen of the Safa Network's addresses, as well as the homes of its top officials.[3] Indictments followed the raids, with federal prosecutors in another trial alleging that one Safa employee, Tarik Hamdi, traveled to Afghanistan to provide Al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden with a battery for a satellite phone.[4] While additional Hamas and jihadist connections were uncovered, the main thrust of the federal investigations initially focused on Safa's financial support and connections to Palestinian Islamic Jihad, its U.S. fundraiser Sami Al-Arian, and Al-Arian's organization, the World Islamic Studies Enterprise. [5]

In the 1990s, Al-Arian and his colleague, Basheer Nafi, used the World and Islam Studies Enterprise, along with another group, the Islamic Committee for Palestine, to raise money and garner support for

Federal investigations into Al-Arian and the World and Islam Studies Enterprise led to the Safa raids. In his 2002 affidavit, Kane explained that "the FBI opened an investigation of the Safa Group's terrorist financing connections" in 1998 directly "as a result of the seizures" made during searches of Al-Arian's addresses in 1995, which had found that "money was being provided directly to PIJ front organizations by individuals controlling the Safa Group."[6]

Al-Arian's right hand-man, Basheer Nafi, also served as a Safa employee. In fact, he was provided "on loan" by the World and Islam Studies Enterprise (WISE) to one of Safa's leading entities, the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT). Federal agents, during the 1995 raids against Al-Arian and the World and Islam Studies Enterprise, uncovered a letter from a Palestinian Islamic Jihad terror leader "stating that IIIT was the largest contributor to WISE." One Safa official, Mohammed Jaghlit, purportedly told FBI agents in 2000 that "IIIT paid WISE for allowing Nafi to work at IIIT in order to conceal the fact that IIIT transferred money to WISE precisely because WISE was a front receiving money for PIJ."[7]

Nonetheless, the federal investigation into Safa eventually collapsed. Along with concerns about the complexity and likely success of future prosecutions, policymakers expressed growing political unease with terror finance prosecutions against domestic Muslims organizations.[8] In addition, the incoming Obama administration began to embrace policies that regarded Muslim Brotherhood Islamism as a possible asset in the fight against Salafi jihadist groups such as Al-Qaeda.[9]

Had the federal investigation continued, however, important institutions on the other side of the Potomac River might have felt the impact.

As early as the 1990s, terror operatives such as Basheer Nafi—the employee of both the World and Islam Studies Enterprise and Safa—was publicly involved with Georgetown University and its Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding. In 1998, editors at *AramcoWorld*, a publication of the Saudi state-owned oil company, quoted Nafi on the Georgetown center's value to the Islamist machine:

> Muslim scholars."[10]

Alongside two other members of the World Islamic Studies Enterprise, Nafi was later indicted. The Department of Justice listed him in 2003 as the "leader of the [Palestinian Islamic Jihad terror group] in the United Kingdom, a member and founder of the PIJ, and a member of the Shura Council."[11]

Two other students from the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding quoted in the article, Muqtedar Khan and Hibba Abugideiri, have been involved with the Safa Network. At the time, Hibba Abugideiri served as an assistant editor at the *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, which is published by Safa's IIIT.[12] Abugideiri later sat on ACMCU's Academic Council.[13] Khan, meanwhile, served as an IIIT "program coordinator" and "non-resident scholar," as well as a senior fellow at a Safa-linked think tank,[14] the Center for Global Policy.[15] Years later, Khan returned to ACMCU to be part of its "academic council."[16]

Later, during the FBI raids, Safa locations targeted included the home of Iqbal Unus,[17] who became a fellow at the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, and the office of IIIT research director Louay Safi, another future fellow for ACMCU who today works for the Qatari regime's Hamad Bin Khalifa University's College of Islamic Studies, a close partner and neighbor of Georgetown's Qatar campus.[18] In the 2000s, federal prosecutors listed Louay Safi as an unindicted co-conspirator in the terror finance case against Al-Arian, producing wiretaps of Safi and Al-Arian discussing collaboration with foreign terrorist groups and claiming Jews controlled the White House.[19]

These examples illustrate just a few single threads within Georgetown and Safa's deeply interwoven relationship. Indeed, from its start, and continuing today, Georgetown's ACMCU and the terror-connected Safa Network appear academically, financially, and ideologically entwined.

Georgetown University and the Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding

center describes itself as an "internationally recognized leader in the study of Islam and Muslim-Christian relations" that aims to "build bridges of mutual understanding between the Muslim world and the West and its understanding of Muslims."[20] As of March 2025, the center comprised 13 staff and faculty members, 13 fellows, five visiting researchers, and 11 members of its "Academic Council."[21]

The center's reach is considerable. Along with hundreds of published books and articles, faculty members engage globally, advising government leaders, diplomats, policymakers, corporate executives, media representatives, and addressing international audiences through media and conferences. The center operates within Georgetown University's Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service,[22] which consistently ranks among the world's top international affairs programs. The school, Georgetown claims, "was founded in 1919—100 years ago—to prepare the U.S. to engage on the global stage and has been preparing future leaders to make the world safer, more equitable, more prosperous, and more peaceful ever since."[23]

In 1993, Hasib Sabbagh, a prominent Palestinian businessman, provided the initial funding to establish the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding. Sabbagh owned an enormous construction empire, and sat on the board of the Arab Bank, a leading financial institution repeatedly accused of historical complicity in Palestinian terrorism.[24]

Sabbagh and his close friend, academic Walid Khalidi, were closely involved with the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) during the height of the group's terrorist activities. Sabbagh claimed to be an advisor to Yasser Arafat, while Khalidi recounts long meetings at their houses in Lebanon, sometimes involving Arafat and his "bodyguard of ten of fifteen tired and hungry fighters expecting to be given dinner or an early breakfast." Khalidi has also described Salah Khalaf, a prominent PLO official and founder of the Black September Organization terrorist group, as his and Sabbagh's "ally."[25]

The architects of Georgetown's Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding with Yasir Arafat at his base in Beirut (1978)

Reportedly, U.S and Arab governments used Hasib Sabbagh as a conduit for contact with the PLO, at a time when direct public communication was barred because of the PLO's terrorist activities. Sabbagh's involvement with the PLO continued for decades, and the Georgetown donor later hosted PLO delegations at his Washington, D.C., house.[26] Leo J. O'Donovan, the former Georgetown president, writes that "Hasib and I were both in Washington on September 13, 1993, when the historic Declaration of Principles was signed by representatives of Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization on the South Lawn of the White House."[27]

Hasib Sabbagh consistently sought to advance the PLO and other Arabist and Palestinian interests in the United States. The late American diplomat Clovis Maksoud writes that Sabbagh "was eager, in particular, for Palestinians to have credible access to U.S. policymakers and decision-makers. The network of contacts he established was equipped to introduce the question of Palestine to the public at a time when the PLO was shunned and its presence illegal." [28]

Khalidi writes that the idea for the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding at Georgetown was developed by himself, Hasib and Basel Aql, a PLO diplomat:

> additional to himself, Rafiq Hariri, Saudi businessman Sheikh Suleiman Olayan, and others. The foundation would advance the grants that would ensure the launching of the [Georgetown] center, whose staff would be composed of a director and four permanent, term and visiting professors.[29]

Sabbagh embraced Esposito as a suitable director for his center. But PLO-aligned monies were not the only funding behind the center. In 1994, just a year after the center was founded, Georgetown officials introduced Sabbagh to Anwar Ibrahim, a founder of IIIT and a key leader in the Safa Network, then serving as deputy prime minister of Malaysia. Sabbagh insisted that the center make use of Ibrahim as a "roving ambassador" for the center's "message."[30] Just a year later, John Esposito writes, "a group of Malaysian businessmen donated $2 million to create the Malaysia Chair in Southeast Asian Islam."[31] Over the next few decades, this chair would be occupied repeatedly by Safa officials and IIIT-linked academics.[32]

Before long, Islamist funding would come to replace the Arabist monies. After the center's "original donor moved on,"[33] Esposito notes, Alwaleed Bin Talal, a Saudi tycoon, pledged $20 million to the center in 2005. In recognition of his support, Esposito renamed the center the Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding (ACMCU).

Section 117 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 requires that academic institutions of higher education that receive federal financial assistance report any foreign gifts or contracts exceeding $250,000 in a calendar year. According to those records, Georgetown University received $30.3 million from entities in Saudi Arabia between 1997 and 2005.[34]

In fact, despite media attention on this Saudi funding, Qatar has far surpassed Saudi Arabia with its financial contributions and partnerships with Georgetown University. The university reports receiving nearly $1 billion from Qatari sources, mostly from entities controlled by the government of Qatar.

With this money, the ACMCU does not just train the next generation of academics, diplomats and policymakers; it also directly intervenes in public policy discussions on extremism, radicalization, and

Director of The Bridge Initiative: Protecting Pluralism—Ending Islamophobia Program."[35] In fact, the new Bridge Initiative was "housed" at the ACMCU. The project serves, it claims, to "disseminate original and accessible research, offers engaging analysis and commentary on contemporary issues, and hosts a wide repository of educational resources to inform the general public about Islamophobia."[36] The Bridge Initiative does this through an extensive collection of "fact sheets" on "Islamophobic" persons and groups.

Critics of the Bridge Initiative, however, point out that many of the organization's targets are reformist Muslim voices and anti-Islamist activists from Hindu and Jewish backgrounds.[37] J. Daryl argues that "Bridge shows little regard for those making nuanced rational critiques based on Islamic theology or on distinctions between Islam and Islam*ism*."[38] An Austrian court, meanwhile, reportedly declared that the Bridge Initiative is part of an effort "intended to disseminate the fighting term 'Islamophobia' with the goal of preventing any critical engagement with Islam as a religion [...] in order to establish an Islamic state."[39]

Today, many leading academics and government officials are graduates of Georgetown's Walsh School of Foreign Service and its ACMCU. These officials shape American domestic and foreign policy, drawing from an education subsidized and influenced, as this report will illustrate, by anti-democratic foreign Islamist regimes, as well as a powerful network of domestic radical forces.

Key Staff at the ACMCU

Staff at ACMCU include academics with extremist links, and some with open connections to designated terrorist groups.

Badar Khan Suri: In March 2025, immigration authorities detained Suri, a postdoctoral fellow at ACMCU. He now faces deportation proceedings.[40] The arrest followed an article published by the Middle East Forum exposing Suri's repeated praise of Hamas terror and relation to senior figures in the designated terrorist organization.[41]

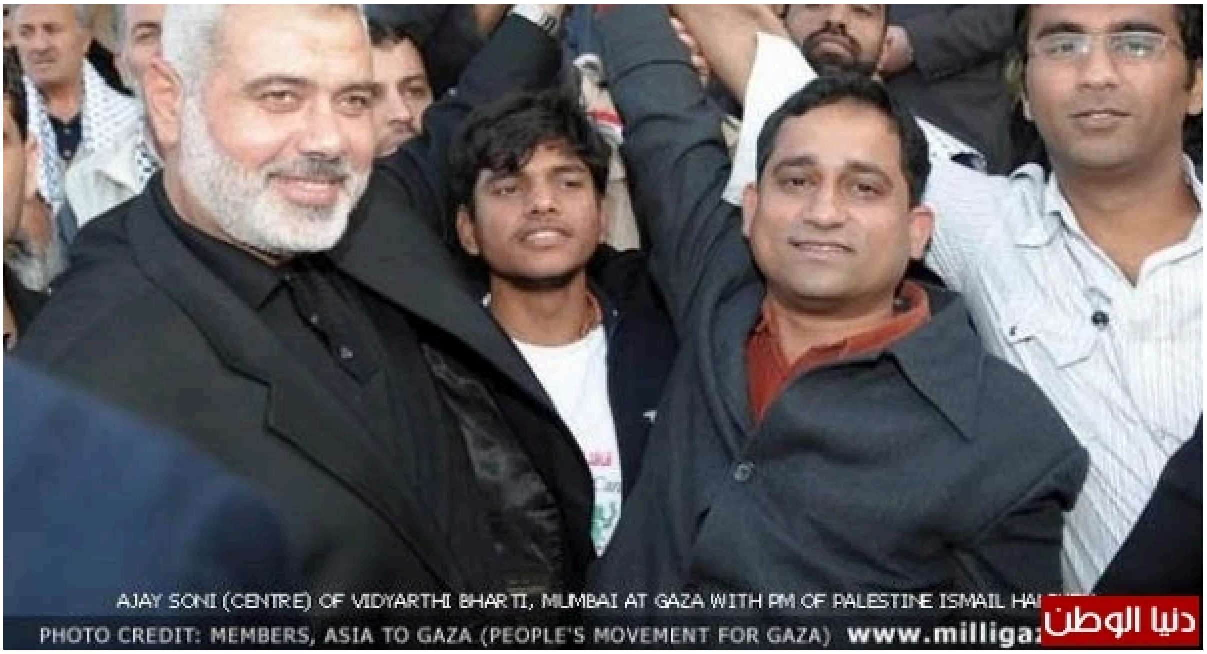

AJAY SONI (CENTRE) OF VIDYARTHI BHARTI, MUMBAI AT GAZA WITH PM OF PALESTINE ISMAIL HA

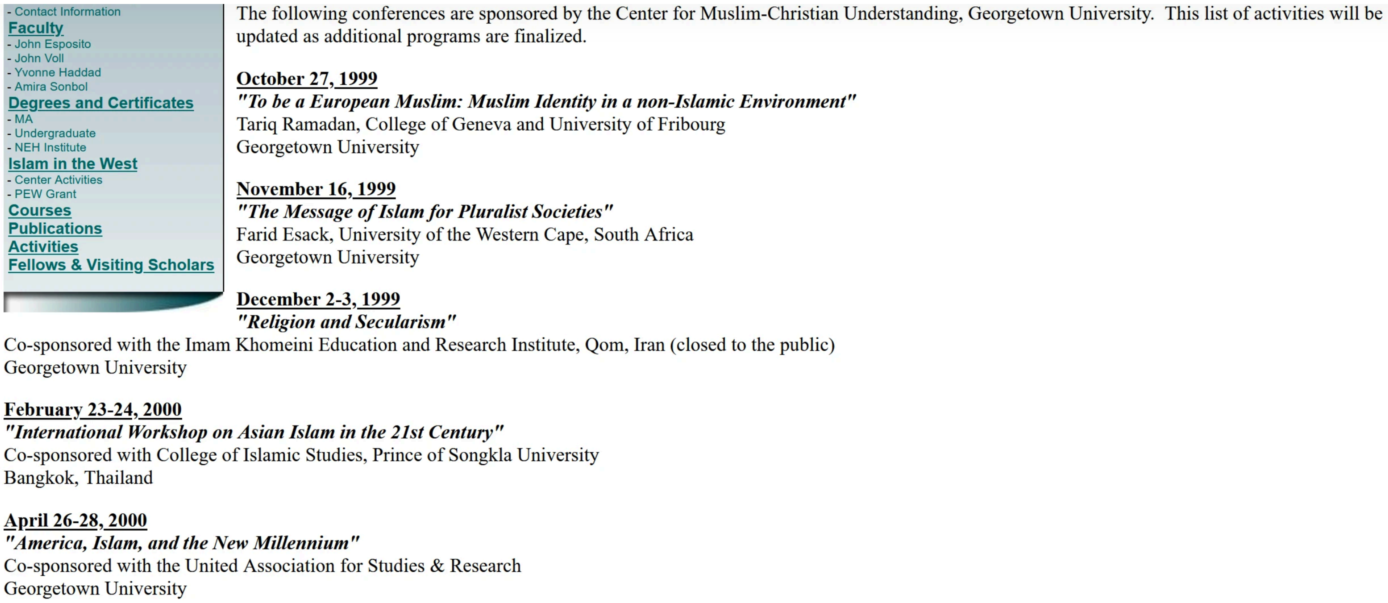
PHOTO CREDIT: MEMBERS, ASIA TO GAZA (PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT FOR GAZA) www.milliga

ACMCU fellow Badar Khan Suri (right) holds hands in a celebratory gesture with Ismail Haniyeh (left), the Hamas terror leader.[42]

In a picture reported on by David Litman of CAMERA, Suri holds hands in a celebratory gesture with Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh. And pictures of Suri's wedding show the ACMCU fellow holding a photograph of former Palestinian Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat kissing the forehead of Ahmed Yassin, founder of Hamas.[43] Suri met his wife, a Georgetown student,[44] during an aid trip to Gaza.

Suri's father-in-law is Ahmed Yousef, a former adviser to the late terrorist leader Ismail Haniyeh. Yousef served as executive director for the United Association for Studies and Research (UASR), a think tank based in Springfield, Virginia,[45] which was established by designated terrorist Mousa Abu Marzouk,[46] a founding member of Hamas.[47]

In April 2000, the ACMCU organized a joint conference with Hamas's UASR. [48] In fact, ACMCU founder John Esposito served as editor for the UASR journal and sat on its advisory board.[49] Other ACMCU advisors and faculty members once involved with UASR's journal include Louay Safi, Nader Hashemi, and Charles Butterworth.[50]



- Contact Information
Faculty
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- Amira Sonbol
Degrees and Certificates
- MA
- Undergraduate
- NEH Institute
Islam in the West
- Center Activities
- PEW Grant
Courses
Publications
Activities
Fellows & Visiting Scholars

The following conferences are sponsored by the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, Georgetown University. This list of activities will be updated as additional programs are finalized.

October 27, 1999
"To be a European Muslim: Muslim Identity in a non-Islamic Environment"
Tariq Ramadan, College of Geneva and University of Fribourg
Georgetown University

November 16, 1999
"The Message of Islam for Pluralist Societies"
Farid Esack, University of the Western Cape, South Africa
Georgetown University

December 2-3, 1999
"Religion and Secularism"
Co-sponsored with the Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute, Qom, Iran (closed to the public)
Georgetown University

February 23-24, 2000
"International Workshop on Asian Islam in the 21st Century"
Co-sponsored with College of Islamic Studies, Prince of Songkla University
Bangkok, Thailand

April 26-28, 2000
"America, Islam, and the New Millennium"
Co-sponsored with the United Association for Studies & Research
Georgetown University

A screenshot from the CMCU website, displaying events with various Islamist organizations and activists, including terrorist group Hamas's U.S. front, the United Association for Studies & Research.

Jonathan A.C. Brown: A professor of Islamic Studies and Muslim-Christian Understanding at ACMCU, Brown is a prominent member of American Islamist circles and the son-in-law of deported Palestinian Islamic Jihad leader and terror financier Sami Al-Arian.

Brown is closely involved with organizations such as Ummatics,[51] a pro-caliphate group that explicitly advocates a plan to "unite" disparate Islamist movements to advance global Islamic governance and pursue aims such as "ending the entity" of Israel.[52] In 2017, Brown was widely criticized in prominent media outlets for delivering a "defense of the Islamic practice of slavery" and "non-consensual sex."[53] In 2025, Brown expressed his hope for a "symbolic strike" on a U.S. military base by Iran.[54]

For many years, Brown's featured picture on his Facebook profile has been the "R4BIA" sign, a symbol of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.[55] In 2017, Brown seemingly expressed support for Khatme Nubuwwat, an international network dedicated to inciting violence and hatred against the minority Ahmadiyya Muslim sect.[56] Brown also minimized the violence of the October 7, 2023, attacks, stating

Nader Hashemi: ACMCU's current director, Hashemi was appointed to the position despite suggesting in 2022 that Israel's Mossad might have orchestrated the stabbing of author Salman Rushdie. His comments sparked significant critical media coverage, prompting the University of Denver to distance itself from his views.[58]

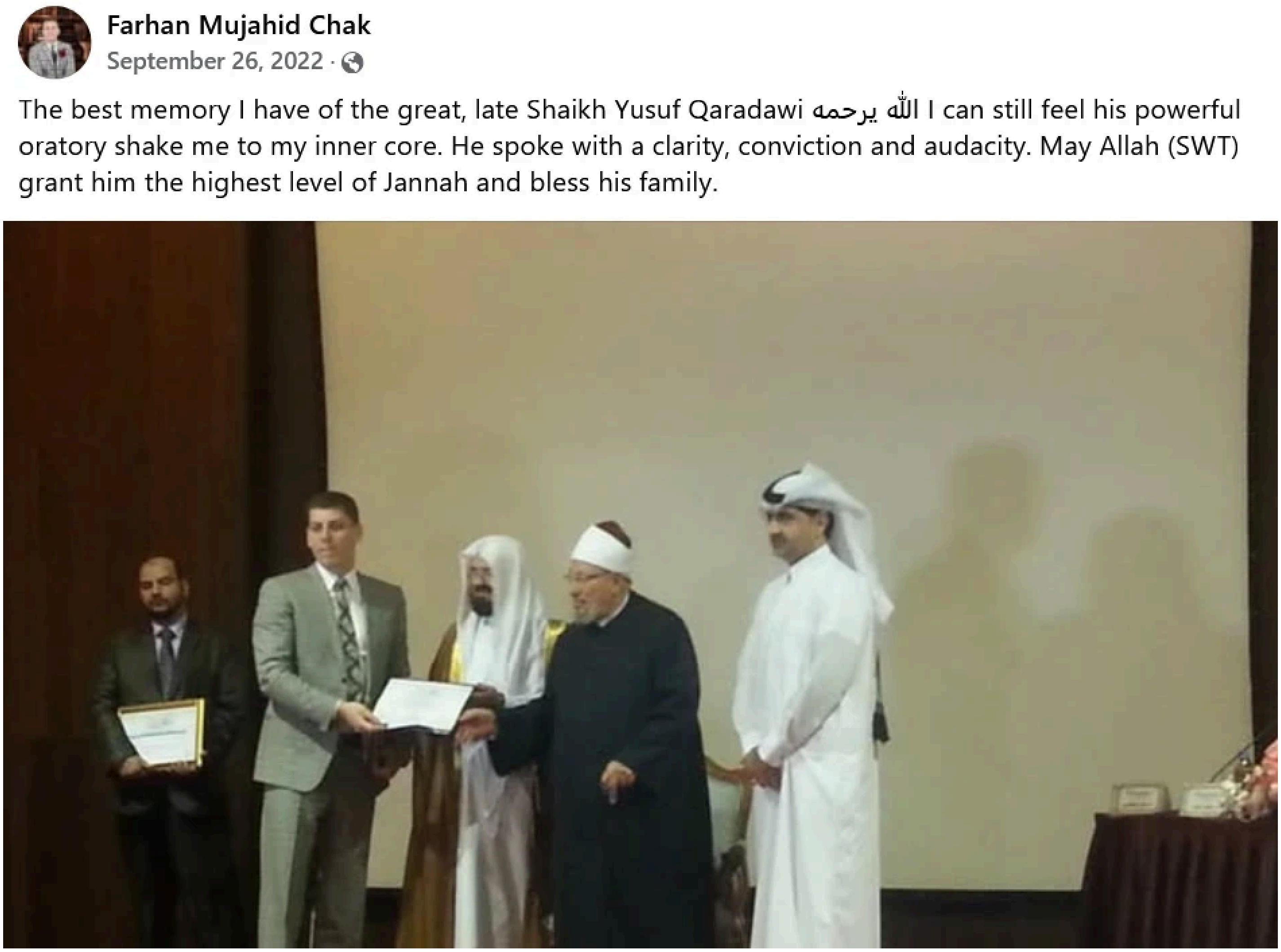
Hashemi is a vocal supporter of Islamism. While in his previous role as a director of the Center for Middle East Studies at the University of Denver, he praised the 2018 election of openly antisemitic politician Mahathir Mohamad as prime minister of Malaysia, writing: "First we take Malaysia, then we take down the other authoritarian regimes that are destroying our world, inshallah."[59]

Hashemi also authored a glowing profile of Malaysia's prime minister and ACMCU senior fellow Anwar Ibrahim.[60] Hashemi published this in the magazine of the Islamic Society of North America, which was established as a proxy organization for the Muslim Brotherhood, and which federal courts determined in 2008 to be associated with Hamas proxy networks in the U.S.[61]

Hashemi also reportedly served on the editorial board of the Middle East Affairs Journal, a publication of the Hamas-run United Association for Studies and Research.[62]

Tamara Sonn: In an interview with the Iranian regime's *Tehran Times*, Tamara Sonn, ACMCU's Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani Professor Emerita and former director, stated the Tehran regime had "the success of the Islamic Revolution in overthrowing a deeply unpopular, secular government, and replacing it with a government clearly inspired by Islamic principles of social justice." She added, "I consider Ayatollah Khomeini's stress on the integrity of values across social sectors, private and public, and the centrality of justice to those values, to be the basis of his popular appeal and lasting impact."[63]

Farhan Mujahid Chak: A visiting research fellow at ACMCU, Farhan Mujahid Chak collaborates openly with prominent activists and leaders within Middle Eastern and South Asian Islamist movements.[64] Chak has referred to the late jihadist leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani as a "legend"[65] and has spoken at events alongside Sami Al-Arian, the deported terror financier.[66] He also has been



Farhan Mujahid Chak
September 26, 2022 ·

The best memory I have of the great, late Shaikh Yusuf Qaradawi الله يرحمه I can still feel his powerful oratory shake me to my inner core. He spoke with a clarity, conviction and audacity. May Allah (SWT) grant him the highest level of Jannah and bless his family.

Chak is also involved with Ghulam Nabi Fai, who organized a ceremony to "launch Dr. Farhan Mujahid Chak's groundbreaking work on Kashmir."[69] Fai was subject to widespread American media coverage in 2011, when he was charged by American prosecutors with secretly serving as an agent of the Pakistani government. Fai pled guilty, admitting to extensive contact with Pakistan's infamous Inter-Services Intelligence, which has a long history of involvement with terror groups and other Islamist causes.[70]

Chak is the founder of Kashmir Civitas, a nonprofit based in Qatar that "campaigns for the fundamental right of self-determination for the people of the disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir."[71] Although the advocacy group claims to highlight human rights in Kashmir, it in fact designated a terrorist by India, with the Ministry of Home Affairs pointing to involvement with Hizbul Mujahideen.[73]

Kashmir Civitas glorifies convicted or accused terrorists, labeling them "political prisoners."[74] For example, Chak's group has expressed support for Kashmiri activist Yasin Malik, who in 2022 pleaded guilty to terrorism charges before an Indian court;[75] and Asiya Andrabi, founder of the terrorist group Dukhtaran-e-Millat.[76] Dukhtaran-e-Millat, reports the *Economist*, "supports terrorists" and advocates jihad.[77]

Chak, through Kashmir Civitas's YouTube channel, has uploaded a "Rap Song of Resistance" featuring lyrics, which he helped write, such as "we're not scared to meet you on the battlefield … by any means necessary … the freedom fighter say don't walk away" and "we either win or join the martyrs."[78]

Don't Walk Away ft. Brother Ali

In May 2020, Kashmir Civitas jointly hosted an event called "A Conversation on Kashmir and Palestine and the Struggle for Freedom" with a Turkish regime-backed organization, the Center for Islam and ambassador to the U.S. Masood Khan, who is closely involved with several Pakistani and Kashmiri violent extremists and terror operatives.[80]

Farid Hafez: An ACMCU senior research fellow, Hafez was accused by Austrian officials of affiliations with the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas, as well involvement in terrorism financing, money laundering, and efforts to establish Islamist enclaves in Europe. These allegations led to a raid on his home in November 2020 as part of "Operation Luxor." However, in January 2023, the Higher Regional Court in Graz dismissed these charges, citing a lack of evidence.[81] Hafez has consistently denied the accusations, characterizing them as attempts to silence his research on Islamophobia. Hafez is a founding member of the Muslimische Jugend Österreich (MJÖ),[82] an Austrian Muslim youth group involved with Muslim Brotherhood operatives and organizations in Austria.[83]

Ebrahim Rasool: A South African diplomat and a senior fellow at ACMCU, Rasool founded the World for All Foundation,[84] which is registered at an address linked to Sterling Management,[85] a key entity within the Safa Network.[86] The World for All Foundation is a partner of the International Union of Muslim Scholars,[87] a clerical body of the Muslim Brotherhood.

In 2004, following Israel's assassination of Hamas founder Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, Rasool, then serving as finance minister in South Africa's Western Cape, described the Hamas founder as "one of the greatest inspirations."[88] For Hamas dignitaries visiting South Africa, Rasool's office served as a key stopping point. In 2007, while premier of the Western Cape region, Rasool hosted Mohammed Nazzal, a senior member of Hamas's political bureau.[89] In 2024, the U.S. government designated Nazzal, Rasool's Hamas contact, as one of the "key officials who seemingly maintain legitimate, public-facing roles within the group, yet who facilitate their terrorist activities, represent their interests abroad, and coordinate the transfer of money and goods into Gaza."[90]

In 2015, Rasool took part in an initiative to unite Hamas and Fatah, as part of an effort to improve "coherence in resistance." His involvement won him the admiration of terror leader Ismail Haniyeh, the terrorist organization Hezbollah and its "resistance" against Israel. Alongside South African and British Islamists, Rasool joined with the Iranian regime's then-Foreign Minister Mohammad Zarif, as well as Zahra Mostafavi, the daughter of Ayatollah Khomeini, as well as Khaled al-Ghodoumi, the "Hamas Representative in Iran," and Nasser Abousharif, "representative of Palestinian Islamic Jihad Movement in Tehran."[92]

John L. Esposito: The founding director of ACMCU, Esposito is a prolific contributor to the field of Islamic studies. He has authored or edited more than 50 books, including the *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World,* and is often described as "one of America's leading authorities on Islam."[93] However, Esposito is not a dispassionate scholar, but an enthusiastic defender of terrorist organizations and operatives.

In a 2000 interview, Esposito explicitly refused to condemn Hamas.[94] At the time, Esposito was working closely with the United Association for Studies and Research, a Chicago-based think tank founded by designated terrorist Mousa Abu Marzook,[95] a founding member of Hamas who also served as the terror group's deputy chair.[96] In 1995, the U.S. also designated Muhammad Salah, another employee of the United Association for Studies and Research, as a terrorist, after he identified the group as the U.S. base for Hamas's political command.[97]

Despite its links to a violent terrorist organization dedicated to the killing of civilians, Esposito served as editor for the journal of the United Association for Studies and Research, sat on its advisory board in 2000, [98] and published a book through the organization.[99]

Esposito arranged for his Georgetown center to collaborate with the United Association for Studies and Research,[100] hosting an event at which Esposito and his colleagues spoke alongside Hamas official Ahmed Yousef, as well as Azzam Tamimi, reportedly Hamas's "special envoy" to the United Kingdom.[101]

[in] an authoritarian regime, or if you want to paint Islamist activism as a threat. There's a danger in making Bin Laden the poster boy of global terrorism."[102] In 2014, Esposito circulated an article in Moscow-aligned *CounterPunch* magazine, claiming Israeli soldiers used Palestinian children as "soccer balls."[103]

In November 2008, Esposito served as an expert defense witness testifying on behalf of five former Holy Land Foundation officers who were accused of funneling $12 million to Hamas. Esposito previously expressed support for the defendants and spoke at an event to raise money for their legal costs.[104] In his testimony, Esposito reportedly admitted to meeting Hamas leaders in Europe, and purportedly sought to minimize violent and antisemitic statements by the late Muslim Brotherhood leader Yusuf Al-Qaradawi.[105]

John Esposito and the Safa Network

Georgetown University's intersection with Islamist interests appears the result of a friendship between Esposito, an Italian American Catholic, and Muslim scholar Ismail Al-Faruqi. The two met in the early 1970s, as Esposito was pursuing his Ph.D. at Temple University in Philadelphia, where Al-Faruqi was a professor of Islamic thought and philosophy.

Al-Faruqi, a leading figure in Islamic studies academia, influenced Esposito's approach to Islamic studies. In 2024, at a two-hour event at the Institut Islam Actuel, Esposito noted, "I had become very affected by the course that I was in with Ismail." Esposito described close social and personal involvement with Al-Faruqi, even recounting a moment when Al-Faruqi told the Esposito's parents, "You're his physical parents, but I'm his intellectual parent."[106]

As a result of his closeness to Al-Faruqi, Esposito met prominent Islamists from around the world, including "Hassan al-Turabi, who is very prominent in the Arab world … from Sudan and the head of the Muslim Brotherhood there."[107] In fact, Al-Turabi, as noted by the *Guardian*, was an "avid supporter of jihadists" and a one-time host of Bin Laden. Al-Turabi played a key role in the 1989 coup that brought the genocidal president Omar al-Bashir to power.[108] Al-Turabi established a brutal and religion."

Through Al-Faruqi, Esposito also met the key members and institutions of the Safa Network, especially IIIT and its officials. Esposito has declared: "…so many of the people who created the International Institute of Islamic Thought were close to Ismail, and as a result of that, I was close to them, and it's been a blessing."[110]

Esposito's involvement with the Safa Network persisted long after Faruqi's death. In the decades since, he has served as a consistent friend and contributor to organizations and individuals of the Safa Network. In the 2000s, with the news of federal investigations into Safa and Sami Al-Arian, Esposito quickly jumped to the accused Islamists' defense.

Esposito, Safa, and the World and Islam Studies Enterprise

In the early 1990s, Sami Al-Arian, a professor of computer science at the University of South Florida and key Safa figure, founded the World and Islam Studies Enterprise (WISE). Al-Arian was already a well-known Islamist firebrand, preaching before Hamas and other Islamist audiences across America: "Jihad is our path. Victory to Islam. Death to Israel."[111]

The World and Islam Studies Enterprise served as a vital terror support organization for years. Its conferences featured international jihadists such as Omar Abdel Rahman, and board members included Ramadan Abdulah Shallah, who later became the head of Palestinian Islamic Jihad, a designated terrorist organization.[112] Indeed, the World and Islam Studies Enterprise served as the U.S. arm of Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and Al-Arian purportedly served on the terror group's governing council.[113]

After 9/11, federal authorities focused on prosecuting not just Al-Arian, but components of the Safa Network as well. Prosecutors suspected Safa entities of funding terror through the World and Islam Studies Enterprise. After significant legal battles, in 2006, Al-Arian eventually "pleaded guilty to a charge of conspiring to provide services to the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), a specially designated terrorist organization." He agreed to prison and a deportation order at the end of his sentence.[114]

sought to fire him in the face of the media furor over his terrorist activities.[115] Writing to Dr. Judy Genshaft, president at the University of South Florida, Esposito denounced the charges against Al-Arian as a "specific political agenda" by journalists and activists "known for their biased inflammatory approach."[116]

In 2008, Esposito and fellow Georgetown academic John Voll wrote letters in support of Al-Arian for his bond hearing. Esposito claimed to have known Al-Arian for "approximately twenty years," praising him as "an extraordinarily bright, articulate scholar and intellectual-activist, a man of conscience with a strong commitment to peace and social justice." Esposito even acknowledged meeting the terror financier "at conferences sponsored by [the World and Islam Studies Enterprise.]"[117] It is unclear whether Esposito had forgotten, by this point, that the World and Islam Studies Enterprise served as a front for the foreign terrorist organization.

Meanwhile, Voll wrote: "I have known Dr. Al-Arian for almost two decades through meeting at scholarly conferences. I have come to know him best through his family. His daughter, Laila, was in two of my courses while she was an undergraduate student at Georgetown University and I was her advisor in a Certificate (minor) program. His son Abdullah is a doctoral candidate in history at Georgetown University and is currently writing his dissertation. He will be teaching a course in the History Department curriculum this coming fall semester. I am Abdullah's dissertation mentor and doctoral program advisor, and I work regularly with him."[118]

Abdullah Al-Arian is today an academic at Georgetown's Doha campus, and Laila Al-Arian, Sami Al-Arian's daughter, works in a senior position at Qatar's Al Jazeera network and is married to Jonathan Brown, an ACMCU professor. In 2014, Abdullah Al-Arian introduced John Voll before a guest lecture at Georgetown's Doha campus, calling Voll "my mentor during my intellectual foundation."[119] Sami Al-Arian, meanwhile, is today a close partner of the ACMCU from his base in Turkey, as this report later investigates in detail.

and fellow travelers.

Understanding the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT)

The bulk (although not all) of Safa's overlap with Esposito and the rest of the ACMCU involves Safa's flagship organization, the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), the most public institution of the extensive Safa Network [**see Appendix I**].

Perhaps the most prominent Muslim Brotherhood think tank in the world, the IIIT is unapologetically Islamist. A 1989 document published by the group declared that "ultimate loyalty to the nation-state is both impossible and blasphemous."[120] The author advocated a caliphate, blacklisting Muslims who oppose such theocracy.

In 2002, in an article noting the many Muslim Brotherhood ties of the IIIT, the *Washington Post* reported that one book, *Violence*, published in 2002 by the group, calls for the state of Israel to be confronted with "fear, terror and lack of security." The author, AbdulHamid AbuSulayman, an official at the IIIT, declared, "Fighting is a duty of the oppressed people," and that acceptable "targets" can be "civilian or military."[121]

In 2004, the *Washington Post* reported:

> The International Institute of Islamic Thought network was set up in the 1980s largely by onetime Brotherhood sympathizers with money from wealthy Saudis, Muslim activists said. ...
>
> The life story of one of the International Institute of Islamic Thought network's leaders illustrates the key role it has played in the global politics of the Ikhwan [Brotherhood]. Jamal M. Barzinji fled his native Iraq in 1969 when the Baathist regime started executing fellow Islamists. An engineering student and top [Muslim Student Association] leader, he joined MSA associates in 1971 to host the top leaders of the Egyptian Brotherhood, just released from 16 years in prison, for two weeks of meetings in Indiana.
>
> He and other then-MSA leaders helped persuade the Egyptian brothers to try participating in Egyptian elections

In an affidavit filed in 2003, a federal investigator described AbuSulayman as one of the most “ardent supporters” at IIIT for the designated terrorist organizations Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad.[123] As this report will show, AbuSulayman and his daughter also have played pivotal roles in the close relationship between Georgetown, the Safa Network, and malign foreign interests.

IIIT serves as a key think tank for the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist forces. Through IIIT, Ismail Al-Faruqi (Esposito’s mentor) advanced a theory he called the “Islamization of Knowledge”: a framework to teach and understand societal dynamics through an Islamic lens. Ibrahim Kalin, a former fellow at the ACMCU, explained the vision:

> “… Faruqi’s project was proposed to Islamize the existing forms of knowledge imported from the West. … Faruqi’s work and that of IIIT after his death concentrated on the social sciences and education. This had two important consequences. First, Faruqi’s important work on Islamization provided his followers with a framework in which knowledge came to be equated with social disciplines, thus ending up in a kind of sociologism. The prototype of Faruqi’s project is, we may say, the modern social scientist entrusted as arbiter of the traditional ‘Alim.”[124]

Ibrahim Kalin is today the head of Turkey’s National Intelligence Organization and an advisor to Turkey’s Islamist leader Recep Tayyib Erdoğan. Kalin is also a former fellow at the ACMCU, as well as a friend of IIIT.[125] As evident from Kalin’s vision of Islamized knowledge through the “modern social scientist,” the ACMCU has served as an important testing ground for Faruqi and IIIT’s ideas.

Indeed, other ACMCU staff members are also firmly focused on this subject. Not only does John Esposito, founder of the ACMCU, consider himself a disciple of Al-Faruqi, but Esposito and his Georgetown department hired staff who specialized in Islamization of Knowledge at IIIT,[126] spoke at annual events in praise of Faruqi’s work, and hosted joint conferences and events with the IIIT on the subject.[127]

which he (and other Safa officials, including IIIT founder and Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim) helped establish and lead. In Hassan's panel, moderated by IIIT director and former ACMCU faculty member Abubaker Al-Shingieti, Hassan noted the methods by which IIUM instills Islamic teachings into curricula, celebrating "IIUM's decision to not become a secular university and how they managed to achieve it with IIIT support."[128]

In his speech in Virginia as head of the IIIT board in 2019, ACMCU fellow Anwar Ibrahim explicitly reaffirmed his and the IIIT's commitment to "Islamization of Knowledge" ideals. And in August 2022, just a few months before becoming prime minister in Malaysia, Ibrahim declared "IIIT's commitment to Islamisation and Integration of Knowledge" as key ideas for the "realisation of humane governance in Muslim societies and around the world." Anwar Ibrahim is not just a Safa Network official, but a fellow at the ACMCU: both an Islamist world leader implementing Islamist ideas, and a "modern social scientist" developing them.[129]

To what extent, then, is this major Georgetown department, the ACMCU, another institution of the terror-tied, theocratic Safa Network? And is it staffed by complicit academics, Islamist infiltrators, or guileless fellow travelers?

A Beachhead at Georgetown

Both before and after Prince Alwaleed's pledge of a $20 million donation to Georgetown in 2005, Safa officials served on the faculty and board of the ACMCU, while the Georgetown center's officials worked closely with Safa entities and kept up long-standing friendships with Safa founders and officials.

Archived web pages of the ACMCU website from 1999 list M. Kamal Hassan and Mohamed Fathi Osman as "visiting faculty" at the center.[130] Hassan worked closely on Safa's operations in the Far East, and, until his death, helped run IIIT's operations in Malaysia.[131] Osman, meanwhile, served as vice president of the American Association of Muslim Social Scientists, a Safa organization founded by the network's founding theorist (and John Esposito's teacher) Ismail Al-Faruqi.[132]

who served as the "academic advisor" to the IIIT's branch in Pakistan;[135] and Sulayman Nyang, a leading official and contributor to IIIT, as well as an official at the Safa Network's Association of Muslim Social Scientists and the American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences.[136]

From the late 1990s, the ACMCU hosted "Project MAPS: Muslims in American Public Square," as well as the American Muslim Studies Program. Both projects were undertaken through the Safa Network, a fact that MAPS did not seek to hide, hosting regular events with IIIT officials and other leading American Islamists; as well as sponsoring events with Safa's Association of Muslim Social Scientists, at the time run by a Syrian American, Louay Safi, who later became a fellow at the ACMCU.[137]

Project MAPS hired Safa staff. It was led by IIIT's Sulayman Nyang himself, alongside Zahid Bukhari, who was later, with Georgetown's Muqtedar Khan, Imad-ad-Dean Ahmad, and Abubaker al-Shingieti, part of IIIT's "Council of Scholars."[138] IIIT scholar Mumtaz Ahmed, meanwhile, served as Project MAPS "consultant," and later as vice president of the Center for Islam & Public Policy, Safa's successor to the MAPS project.[139]

Project MAPS also appointed Safa officials to its advisory board, including IIIT president Taha Jaber Alwani,[140] who once wrote that Safa and Palestinian Islamic Jihad shared a "common ideology";[141] and Ali A. Mazrui, whom Safa oifcials praised for his "intimate involvement" with IIIT and its journal, the *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, later renamed the *American Journal of Islam and Society*.[142] Mazrui later joined the "academic council" at the ACMCU, along with a former Safa contributor,[143] Hibba Abugideiri.[144]

The MAPS Project published papers by IIIT staff members, such as Iqbal Unus, later a fellow at the ACMCU, whose work featured on Georgetown's website alongside contributors such as Ahmed Yousef, a senior Hamas member who later became an advisor to Ismail Haniyeh, the late leader of Hamas.[145] Yousef wrote for the MAPS Project in his capacity as head of Hamas's now-defunct U.S.

The Safa Network placed Esposito in contact with prominent global Islamist leaders. In 1997, "a unique international association of distinguished Christian and Muslim scholars of conservative and/or culturally traditionalist inclination" established the Circle of Tradition and Progress organization in London.[147] The board came to include Esposito and figures from IIIT such as Taha Al-Alawani and Palestinian Islamic Jihad operative Basheer Nafi, alongside the global Muslim Brotherhood's late spiritual leader and suicide-bombing advocate, Yusuf Al-Qaradawi.[148]

The ACMCU and the Safa Network share extraordinarily close connections, with Georgetown academics contributing to Safa-controlled journals, delivering lectures and publishing works at IIIT, and working for Safa entities or serving on various Safa advisory boards.

Meanwhile, ACMCU fellow Anwar Ibrahim is a founder and chairman of IIIT.[149] Ibrahim was also once listed as a director of the Safa Trust, another leading Safa entity.[150] IIIT "instructors," meanwhile, include ACMCU professor Jonathan A.C. Brown and former associate director John Voll.[151] In fact, Brown offered his infamous defense of slavery while presenting a lecture at the IIIT.[152] Brown has also written about conversations between his family and Safa founder (and apparent Palestinian Islamic Jihad supporter)[153] Jamal Barzinji.[154] As for Voll, he has delivered the "Annual Isma'il Faruqi Lecture" at IIIT, where he expressed his admiration for the Safa founder and key Muslim Brotherhood intellectual.[155]

Additional ACMCU staff and fellows such as Tamara Sonn and Ebrahim Rasool have taken part in IIIT events around the world.[156] Rasool runs his own organization, the World for All Foundation. This nonprofit claims to be based in South Africa, but its U.S. address is registered to a Herndon, Virginia, property controlled by the Safa Network. The nonprofit's filings also list Yaqub Mirza (a key Safa figure[157]) as one of World for All's "care of" mailing recipients.[158] In 2016, Safa's IIIT reported donating $7,000 to Rasool's organization.[159]

ACMCU founder John Esposito, mentors other IIIT fellows working at other departments in Georgetown.[162]

In 2013, Esposito, Sonn and ACMCU scholar Imad-ad-Dean Ahmad, alongside other Georgetown academics, organized a joint conference with a number of Safa Network officials, including IIIT official Abubaker Ahmed Al Shingieti, Jamal Barzinji and former IIIT employee Omer Bin Abdullah.[163] Shingieti later served as a "research associate" at the ACMCU. In the 1990s, Shingieti worked as a senior official in the Sudanese regime of Omar Bashir,[164] as it conducted a campaign of genocide in Darfur.

Meanwhile, ACMCU senior research fellow Farid Hafez is a beneficiary of the Center for Islam in the Contemporary World,[165] a Safa-funded and controlled department at Shenandoah University.[166] Similarly, ACMCU fellow Farhan Mujahid Chak received 10,000GBP through an "IIIT Research Award" in 2005, according to his CV.[167] Chak lists multiple senior Safa figures in his resume as references, including IIIT's Hisham Al-Talib, Jamal Barzinji and Ahmad Totonji.[168]

Following in Esposito's footsteps, academics at the Georgetown center professionally collaborate closely with Safa entities, particularly the IIIT and its published journal. Indeed, today, the editorial board at the IIIT's *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* features Jonathan Brown, as well as Sohaira Siddiqui, a professor at Georgetown's Qatar campus. The "international advisory board" of Safa's *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* includes the ACMCU's John Esposito and Tamara Sonn, who have served on this board since early 2001, alongside Safa's most controversial officials,[169] as well as international Islamists such as Khurshid Ahmad, a senior leader in Jamaat-e-Islami, an Islamist movement based in Pakistan. Ahmad has described the Taliban as "refulgent and splendid" and warned about the "implication of Europe's [sic] being in the clasp of Jews."[170]

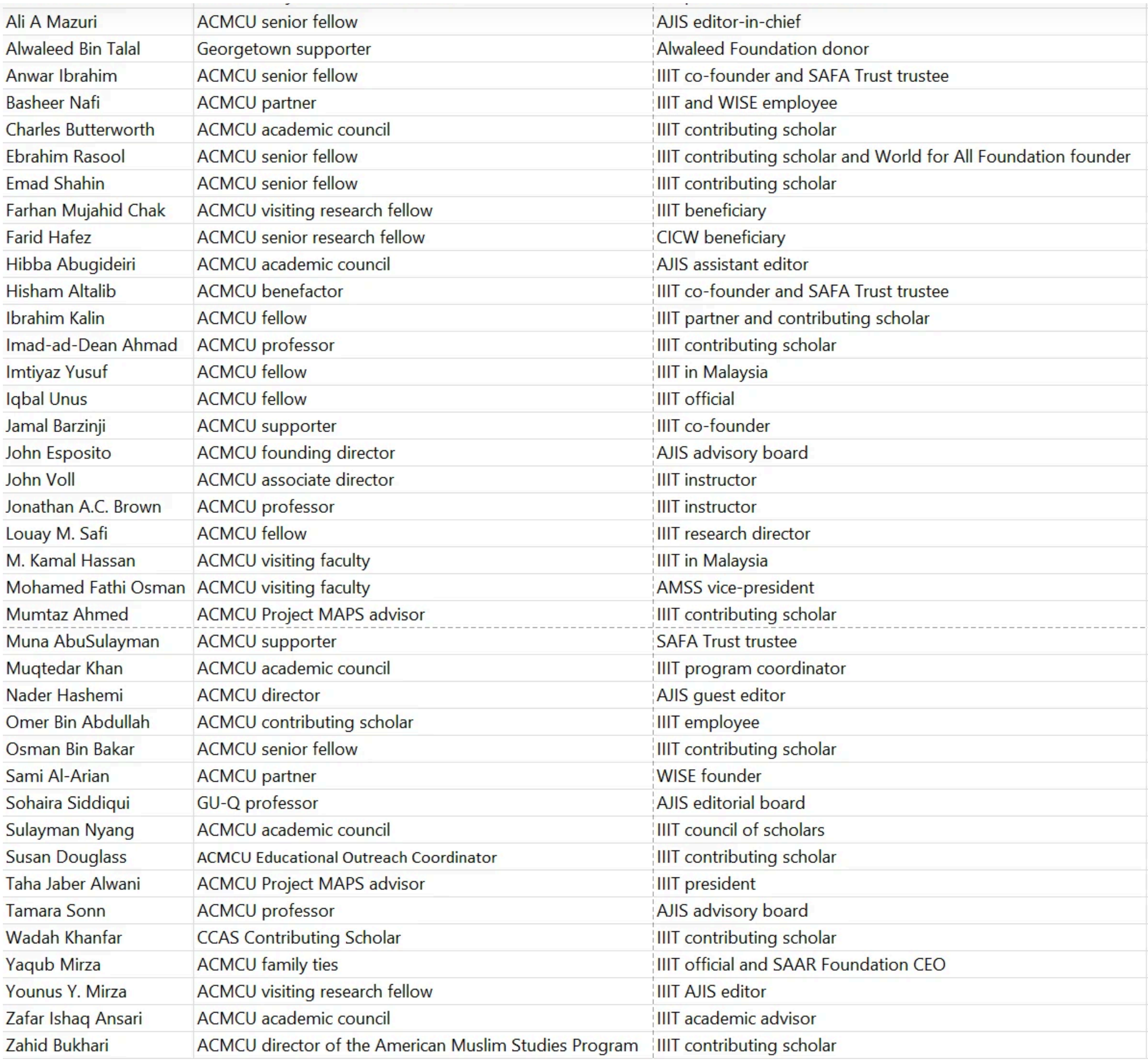
International Institute of Islamic Thought
IIT
.org
Dr. Hisham Altalib
Anwar Ibrahim

ACMCU fellow, IIIT founder, and Malaysian statesman Anwar Ibrahim (left) and ACMCU professor Emad Shahin (right) at the International Institute of Islamic Thought, with Safa Network official Hisham Altalib (center)

Ibrahim,[171] Sonn,[172] and other ACMCU academics have published at Safa's *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences,* while Nader Hashemi has served as the journal's "guest editor."[173] In addition, ACMCU's Emad Shahin[174] and Susan Douglass[175] have published books or papers through the IIIT's publishing arm. Meanwhile, the journal's book review editor is Younus Mirza, another ACMCU fellow and son of Safa founding figure Yaqub Mirza, whose home was raided in 2003 by federal agents investigating the Safa Network connections to terror.[176]

Forty-three past or present Georgetown faculty and advisory members have played a past or present role within the Safa network. Forty of those Georgetown members worked at the ACMCU.

Past and present Georgetown faculty past or presently involved with the Safa Network [see Appendix I]



Ali A Mazuri	ACMCU senior fellow	AJIS editor-in-chief
Alwaleed Bin Talal	Georgetown supporter	Alwaleed Foundation donor
Anwar Ibrahim	ACMCU senior fellow	IIIT co-founder and SAFA Trust trustee
Basheer Nafi	ACMCU partner	IIIT and WISE employee
Charles Butterworth	ACMCU academic council	IIIT contributing scholar
Ebrahim Rasool	ACMCU senior fellow	IIIT contributing scholar and World for All Foundation founder
Emad Shahin	ACMCU senior fellow	IIIT contributing scholar
Farhan Mujahid Chak	ACMCU visiting research fellow	IIIT beneficiary
Farid Hafez	ACMCU senior research fellow	CICW beneficiary
Hibba Abugideiri	ACMCU academic council	AJIS assistant editor
Hisham Altalib	ACMCU benefactor	IIIT co-founder and SAFA Trust trustee
Ibrahim Kalin	ACMCU fellow	IIIT partner and contributing scholar
Imad-ad-Dean Ahmad	ACMCU professor	IIIT contributing scholar
Imtiyaz Yusuf	ACMCU fellow	IIIT in Malaysia
Iqbal Unus	ACMCU fellow	IIIT official
Jamal Barzinji	ACMCU supporter	IIIT co-founder
John Esposito	ACMCU founding director	AJIS advisory board
John Voll	ACMCU associate director	IIIT instructor
Jonathan A.C. Brown	ACMCU professor	IIIT instructor
Louay M. Safi	ACMCU fellow	IIIT research director
M. Kamal Hassan	ACMCU visiting faculty	IIIT in Malaysia
Mohamed Fathi Osman	ACMCU visiting faculty	AMSS vice-president
Mumtaz Ahmed	ACMCU Project MAPS advisor	IIIT contributing scholar
Muna AbuSulayman	ACMCU supporter	SAFA Trust trustee
Muqtedar Khan	ACMCU academic council	IIIT program coordinator
Nader Hashemi	ACMCU director	AJIS guest editor
Omer Bin Abdullah	ACMCU contributing scholar	IIIT employee
Osman Bin Bakar	ACMCU senior fellow	IIIT contributing scholar
Sami Al-Arian	ACMCU partner	WISE founder
Sohaira Siddiqui	GU-Q professor	AJIS editorial board
Sulayman Nyang	ACMCU academic council	IIIT council of scholars
Susan Douglass	ACMCU Educational Outreach Coordinator	IIIT contributing scholar
Taha Jaber Alwani	ACMCU Project MAPS advisor	IIIT president
Tamara Sonn	ACMCU professor	AJIS advisory board
Wadah Khanfar	CCAS Contributing Scholar	IIIT contributing scholar
Yaqub Mirza	ACMCU family ties	IIIT official and SAAR Foundation CEO
Younus Y. Mirza	ACMCU visiting research fellow	IIIT AJIS editor
Zafar Ishaq Ansari	ACMCU academic council	IIIT academic advisor
Zahid Bukhari	ACMCU director of the American Muslim Studies Program	IIIT contributing scholar

Safa Established and Funded the ACMCU

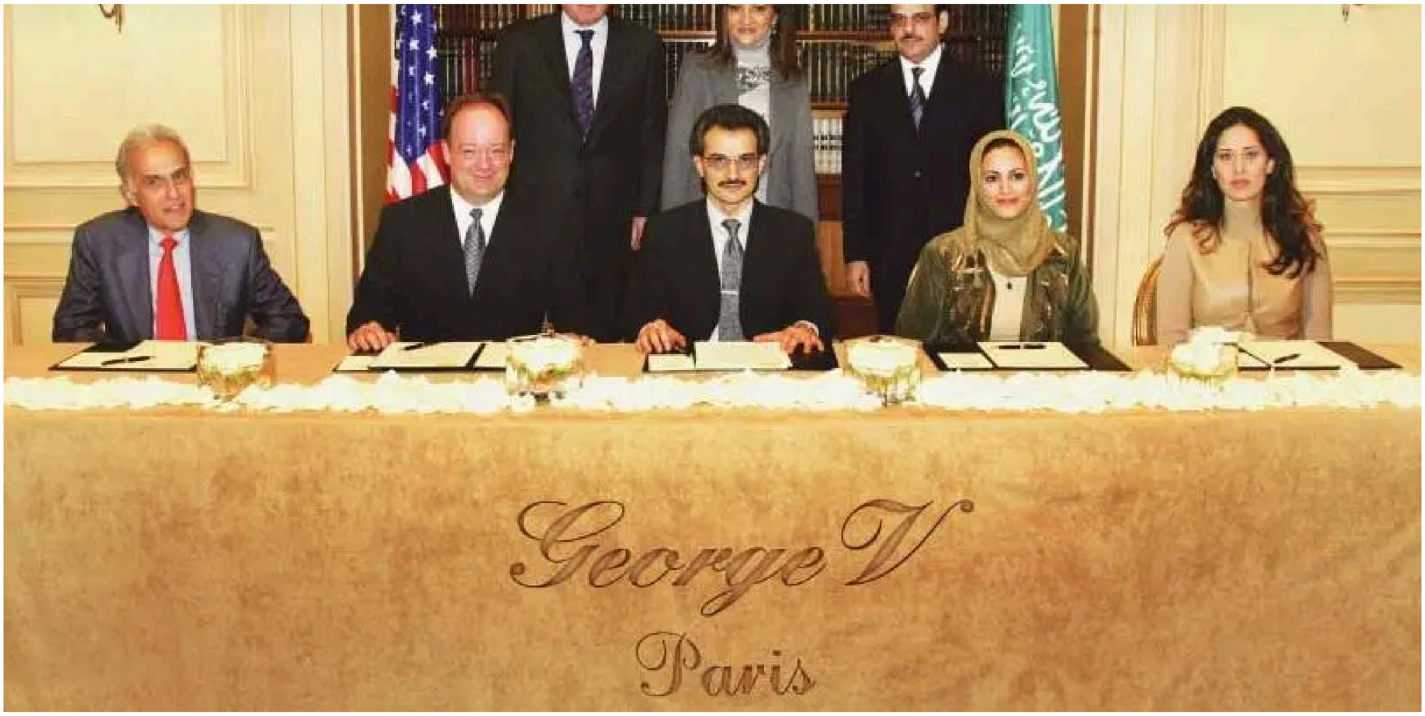
Safa-affiliated academics have constituted a consistent proportion of the ACMCU's faculty since the center's inception (as the CMCU) in the 1990s. But how else did Safa establish and maintain this Georgetown department?

2005, Safa entities and the ACMCU partnered regularly and closely, holding joint conferences and seminars,[177] featuring many leading Safa academics who later would become fellows or faculty at the Georgetown center.[178]

Before the mid-2000s, Safa's influence over the center was clear. Existing criticism of Georgetown and the ACMCU, however, has focused on the $20 million "gift" in 2005 from Saudi Arabia's Al-Waleed bin Talal Al-Saud.[179] New research, however, indicates that the terror-connected Safa Network arranged and managed this funding. This was not a Saudi Wahhabi venture, but a Virginia-based domestic Islamist initiative.

The "executive director" of Prince Alwaleed's charitable foundation, which handled the $20 million endowment, is none other than Muna AbuSulayman, the daughter of IIIT founder and terror advocate AbdulHamid AbuSulayman.[180] Esposito himself has noted that Muna "came right out of International Institute of Islamic Thought."[181] Muna told Al-Jazeera in 2008 that Alwaleed placed her in charge of establishing and running the charitable foundation, and she decided to focus on funding academic "centers" in the West.[182] Today, Muna is a trustee of the Safa Trust, one of the Safa Network's grant-making foundations.[183]

Before the funding was announced, Esposito and a colleague from the ACMCU traveled with Georgetown president John J. DeGioia to Paris to meet with Prince Alwaleed and his employee, Safa's Muna AbuSulayman in Paris, at the George V hotel.[184]



Georgetown meeting with Prince Alwaleed and Safa's Muna AbuSulayman (front row, left-right: John Esposito, Georgetown University President John DeGioia, Alwaleed Bin Talal, Muna AbuSulayman). *[185]*

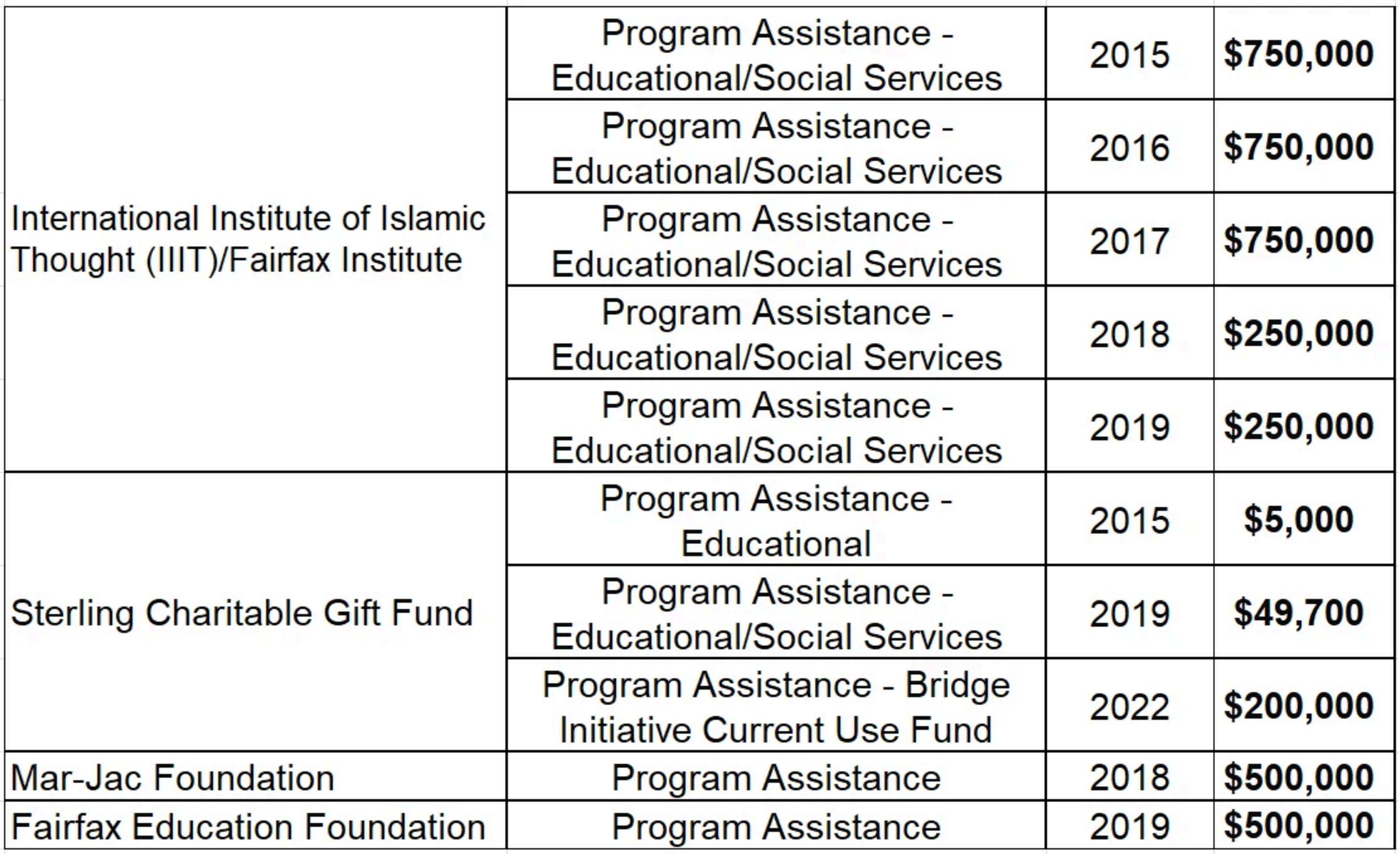
AbuSulayman was not the only Safa-linked person involved in the negotiations. According to Esposito, Alwaleed himself appointed IIIT official Jamal Barzinji to serve on the "committee" established to fund ACMCU.[186] Indeed, Esposito praised Barzinji for his "leadership in establishing" the Alwaleed centers. Barzinji, Esposito explains, managed much of the arrangements: He "came to the university, met the administration..." He was, Esposito has reminisced, "a major player in our getting the endowment that ensures we will exist forever."[187] At the same event, Dr. Abubaker Alshingieti stated: "Without the intervention of Dr Jamal, CMCU would have been history by now."[188]

Safa was the key to Alwaleed's donations. In 2009, Esposito, along with his colleagues at the ACMCU, Alexa Poletto and John Voll, traveled to London to meet with three other academic beneficiaries, which included representatives from Harvard University and the British universities of Cambridge and Edinburgh. At that meeting, these academics were joined by Safa's Jamal Barzinji, Omer Totonji (son of IIIT co-founder Ahmad Totonji and brother-in-law of Safa's Ahmed Alwani), Anas Al-Shaikh Ali, the

Front row, left-right: Jamal Barzinji (SAAR Foundation and IIT), Unknown Woman, Alexa Poletto (Georgetown), Roy Mottahedeh (Harvard), Muna AbuSulayman (Alwaleed and IIIT), Jerry Leach (American University Cairo), John Esposito (Georgetown), Cliff Gardner (Harvard).
Back row, left-right: Charles Butterworth (IIIT), Hugh Goddard (Edinburgh), John Voll (Georgetown), Patrick McGreevy (American University in Beirut), Patrick Mason (Georgetown), Yasir Suleiman (Cambridge), Anas Al-Shaikh-Ali (IIIT), Carole Hillenbrand (Edinburgh), Omer Totonji (IIIT).

It appears Safa's control over these academic centers was carefully implemented. Muna AbuSulayman and two of the other Safa operatives present at the 2009 meeting, Omer Totonji and Anas Al-Shaikh Ali, were, for example, inserted into the "management committee" of the Alwaleed center at Cambridge University.[191] In 2010, all three were listed on the committee as "Representatives from the Kingdom Foundation of HRH Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal."[192] Safa, it seems, acquired control of the charitable expenditures for Saudi's wealthiest billionaire and one of the richest men in the world.

of funding for Georgetown, with at least one grant in 2022 specified for use by the "Bridge Initiative."[193]



International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT)/Fairfax Institute	Program Assistance - Educational/Social Services	2015	**$750,000**
	Program Assistance - Educational/Social Services	2016	**$750,000**
	Program Assistance - Educational/Social Services	2017	**$750,000**
	Program Assistance - Educational/Social Services	2018	**$250,000**
	Program Assistance - Educational/Social Services	2019	**$250,000**
Sterling Charitable Gift Fund	Program Assistance - Educational	2015	**$5,000**
	Program Assistance - Educational/Social Services	2019	**$49,700**
	Program Assistance - Bridge Initiative Current Use Fund	2022	**$200,000**
Mar-Jac Foundation	Program Assistance	2018	**$500,000**
Fairfax Education Foundation	Program Assistance	2019	**$500,000**

However, Safa seems to have been funding Bridge before the 2022 grant. Bridge head and ACMCU founder John Esposito recounted in 2016, during an IIIT seminar on the "legacy of Dr. Jamal Barzinji," (a founding Safa Network official) that "Jamal asked me to come out and see him. We had a long two hours [discussion] about the need for funding. … A few months later… Jamal presents me with a contract already written up. It's supposed to come to the university to write the contract. He presented it to me for my signature, as well as the president, and gave me the initial check."[194]

In 2017, the IIIT revealed on its website:

> individuals or organizations—who contributed $1 million or more to the University.
>
> Through IIIT's generous donation, Georgetown University's Bridge Initiative was able to connect the academic study of Islamophobia with the general public. The Bridge Initiative and its Pluralism, Diversity, and Islamophobia project create extensive and original research on Islamophobia in order to bridge the cultural divide for peaceful co-existence.[195]

International Islamist Axis

The Safa Network works to foster collaboration between Georgetown University's ACMCU and three authoritarian Islamist regimes: Turkey, Qatar, and Malaysia. This calculated approach employs Safa-affiliated institutions to forge partnerships, expanding the network's reach into academic and government circles.

A new global Sunni Islamist axis, comprising the regimes of Turkey, Qatar, and Malaysia, has played an increasingly vital role in the spread of extremism in the West, as well as funding and supporting terrorism in the East. This axis has been formalized at the highest levels, with heads of state agreeing to joint international endeavors.[196]

Academic and political institutions of these regimes operate in close cooperation. The International Islamic University Malaysia, for example, shares staff, offices, and research programs with the Qatari government's Qatar Foundation in Doha,[197] while its alumni include senior leaders of the Turkish regime's Directorate of Religious Affairs, otherwise known as the Diyanet.[198] The Malaysian prime minister and Georgetown academic, Anwar Ibrahim, has regularly shared platforms organized by Qatari and Turkish regime institutions, alongside other fellow faculty members.[199]

Some of this international Sunni bloc's partnership revolves around support for Islamist terror groups such as Hamas. As noted by the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, Hamas "conducts extensive social and cultural activities for students at the International Islamic University

Qatar host Hamas leaders, while Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim maintains close personal relationships with Hamas leaders, including Khaled Meshal and the late Ismail Haniyeh.[201]

These regimes, institutions, and officials are connected to Georgetown. And Safa's operatives are found within every connection.

Qatar

Even before Saudi Arabian Prince Alwaleed's 2005 donation, the Department of Education's Section 117 data reveal that the value of Qatari contracts with Georgetown far exceeded Saudi contributions. Much of this funding appeared to support Georgetown's Doha campus, which opened in 2005 as an extension of the university's School of Foreign Service, the parent department of the ACMCU.

Much of the billion dollars of funding provided to Georgetown was earmarked for Georgetown's Doha campus. Based in Education City—a district in the city run by the Qatar Foundation—Georgetown University in Qatar (GU-Q) was established, according to an academic there, "with the goal of expanding the School of Foreign Service."[202]

Established in 2005, the campus was the idea of Qatar's Islamist government. According to a self-congratulatory book published by Christine Schiwietz, an assistant dean at Georgetown University's Qatar campus, the Qatar Foundation offered that "in exchange for Georgetown's presence and expertise in service and international affairs," the regime institution would pay all upfront expenses.[203] The chapter is relatively small compared to other Qatari universities, with an enrollment of 464 students in 2024.[204] It operates under heavy influence of the Safa Network.

Today, the Qatar campus remains primarily focused on its foreign service program, but also offers additional degrees, and features a large faculty, which includes Qatari ruling family member Nouf Mubarak bin Saif Al-Thani.[205] Such nepotism accompanies obsequious rhetoric from academics on the campus towards the ruling family and the state. Schiwietz, for example, has published praise of Qatar—a Wahhabi theocracy in which flogging and the death penalty are statutory sharia-based

On campus, the faculty notes students "have the opportunity to apply for non-credit-bearing internships with a variety of notable Qatari industries," including major regime organizations such as "Al Jazeera and Qatar Airways."[207] The campus boasts that its students go on to work for Al-Jazeera, as well as Qatari government offices and the campus's own benefactor and host, the Qatar Foundation.[208]

The Qatar Foundation is a curious choice of partner and benefactor for a prominent Western university. For decades, it has served as a major soft power arm of the Qatari regime, wielding close ties to violent extremists, including the late Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh.[209]

Qatar Foundation official Haya Al-Nassr with Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh.[210]

The Qatar Foundation's chair is Sheikha Moza Bint Nasser, mother of the Qatari head of state. She recently eulogized Yahya Sinwar, the late terrorist leader responsible for the October 7 attacks.[211] In colleagues, a special mention of Bint Nasser in her book's acknowledgements, praising her "incredible vision."

Despite this deeply questionable partnership, as noted by Georgetown academics, "For many U.S. diplomats, Georgetown's School of Foreign Service in Qatar provides ideal training for the State Department."[213]

Today, Georgetown University in Qatar continues to flourish, and operates in close partnership not just with the Qatar Foundation, but with other major organs of the Qatari regime.[214]

With the Qatar Foundation's tens of millions of dollars of funding to Georgetown University, the ties between the two are close. Staff at the ACMCU linked to the Qatar Foundation include Josef Meri, a senior fellow who serves as a "consultant" of the Qatar Foundation, according to his official LinkedIn page.[215] Meri was previously a faculty member at the Hamad Bin Khalifa University in Doha, which is run by the Qatar Foundation.

At the Qatar Foundation's "Education City" campus, Georgetown's campus is a direct neighbor of the College of Islamic Studies, part of Hamad Bin Khalifa University. The College of Islamic Studies is a long-standing partner of Georgetown.[216] In fact, the dean of the College of Islamic Studies until 2022 was Emad Shahin, a senior fellow at the ACMCU.[217] And John Esposito previously sat on College of Islamic Studies' advisory board.[218] Staff float back and forth between the institutions: ACMCU staff member Josef Meri claims to teach "religious pluralism at HBKU College of Islamic Studies, Qatar Foundation and Georgetown University in Qatar."[219]

The Qatar Foundation is also involved with IIIT. The deputy director of Qatar Foundation's Center for Islamic Legislation and Ethics, Dr. Jasser Auda, is a teacher of IIIT programs and member of its academic committee.[220]

Georgetown University's Qatar campus, along with many U.S. campuses in Doha's Education City, serves as an important Islamist platform. In September 2024, Georgetown's Qatar campus hosted its previously served as an official for the terror group Hamas.[222] Other speakers were leaders of the movement to destroy the state of Israel, including: Shawan Jabarin, an alleged member of the U.S-designated terrorist group Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine;[223] Abdullah Al-Arian, an associate professor at Georgetown's Qatar campus; and his sister Laila Al-Arian, an Al-Jazeera journalist.[224] The Al-Arian siblings are children of deported Palestinian Islamic Jihad fundraiser Sami Al-Arian, a key partner of the ACMCU and its donor, the Safa Network.[225] These Islamists were joined by over a dozen Georgetown faculty members.[226]

Qatar is an important partner for the staff and fellows of the ACMCU. The center's staff regularly write for Qatari regime-backed media outlets and speak at regime events. John Esposito, for example, is a regular visitor to Doha, where he speaks at regime-sponsored conferences[227] and holds joint events, on behalf of the Bridge Initiative, with government media such as Al-Jazeera, alongside Georgetown colleague and Qatar Foundation employee Emad Shahin.[228] Nader Hashemi, currently the director of the ACMCU, has spoken at the regime's Hamad Bin Khalifa University in Doha, as well as the Washington branch of the Qatar regime think tank, the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies. He has also spoken at events hosted by the think tank DAWN, [229] which is aligned with Doha,[230] and where Hashemi is a "non-resident fellow."[231] Another ACMCU faculty member, Abdullah Alaoudh, served as a senior official at DAWN.[232]

Farhan Mujahid Chak, a research fellow at the ACMCU, is employed by both the Qatar University and the Qatar Faculty of Islamic Studies.[233] As with many of his ACMCU colleagues, he regularly contributes to media owned and operated by the Qatari regime. Another fellow at the center, Ebrahim Rasool, was South Africa's ambassador to the United States, and a prominent figure in international Islamist circles.[234] As a fellow, Rasool has met with Qatari regime officials.[235]

Research into the faculty at the ACMCU found that at least seventeen faculty members have worked with institutions backed by the Qatari regime, worked for Qatari regime entities, or written for Qatari regime media.

The center's director, Fida Adely, spoke at the 2024 Georgetown University event in Doha alongside Hamas and Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) terror operatives.[237]

Meanwhile, the board of the Center for Contemporary Arab Studies includes senior officials from the government of Qatar and royal family member Abdulrahman bin Saud Al-Thani, as well as Patrick Theros, the former U.S. ambassador to Qatar, who introduced Georgetown leadership to Qatari Leadership and serves as a fierce defender of the autocratic Gulf state and its involvement with American academia.[238] Theros previously served on the board of the Qatar Foundation International, the U.S. arm of the regime's leading soft power organization and Georgetown's host in Doha. Theros' endorsements of the group are featured in Qatar Foundation press releases.[239]

Theros is also a "strategic advisor" to the Gulf International Forum,[240] a Doha-aligned think tank that receives funding from Qatari regime proxies.[241] The Gulf International Forum's board includes Qatari diplomats and a member of the Qatari royal family.[242] Its conferences are frequently held at Georgetown University,[243] or feature prominent Georgetown University academics as speakers, who share the stage with regime representatives and officials.[244] Theros wrote a foreword for the book, *America's Higher Education Goes Global*, a book written by a Georgetown faculty member, which celebrates the university's close involvement with Qatar and praises the regime's autocratic ruling family.[245] Theros is not the Gulf International Forum's only link to Georgetown. The executive director of this Qatari proxy organization is Dania Thafer, a senior lecturer at Georgetown's Qatar-funded Center for Contemporary Arab Studies.[246]

Turkey

In 1982, the Turkish government provided $3 million to Georgetown to establish the Institute of Turkish Studies (ITS). The institute awarded hundreds of research grants, developed Turkish study programs and contributed to the publication of books and journals. As reported by Georgetown newspaper the *Hoya*, the institute was credibly accused of serving as a soft power front for Ankara. Former ITS board member Jenny White explained: "In terms of bang for your buck, [ITS] is the best genocide.[247] In 1985, Armenian activist Harut Sassounian alleged that twenty of the sixty-nine signatories to a genocide denial letter, reportedly drafted by Lowry, had received grants from the ITS.[248]

Upon the election of an Islamist government in Turkey, under President Erdoğan, the regime increased pressure on the ITS to follow a pro-regime agenda, to little apparent protest from Georgetown's top officials. Some of the ITS staff, however, felt otherwise. ITS chairman, Professor Donald Quataert, resigned in 2006 after "after he refused to accede to the request of ITS's honorary chairman, Ambassador Nebi Şensoy, that he issue a retraction of a scholarly book review he wrote about the killings of Armenians (1915-1918) in the Ottoman Empire."[249]

In 2015, the Turkish government withdrew funding for the ITS, just after Turkish ambassador Serdar Kılıç reportedly expressed that "recent work from the ITS was negative toward the Turkish government and expressed interest in redirecting the work of ITS to politically benefit the government."[250] The ITS shut down for good in 2020.

The Turkish regime did not lose its ability to influence. Just a few weeks after the Turkish regime cut funding for ITS, construction of the Diyanet Center of America, just a few miles away in Maryland, was completed. With $110 million in funding from the regime, the Diyanet Center, also known as the Turkish American Community Center, is a branch of an official Turkish government department: the Directorate of Religious Affairs. Western government and media have noted with alarm that the regime uses Diyanet offices and centers around the world for espionage, political propaganda, and intimidation of regime dissidents.[251]

In 2018, the head of the Diyanet in Turkey, Ali Erbas, traveled to Washington to visit the Diyanet Center in Maryland. He also stopped off at the "Islamic Cultural Center at Georgetown University," which was being built "under the auspices of the Directorate of Religious Affairs."[252] The mosque, now known as the Yarrow Mamout Masjid, opened in 2023, with Qatari and Turkish diplomats

Despite Diyanet funding for the mosque, the Department of Education's Section 117 data do not show corresponding Turkish monies for Georgetown that year. In fact, the money was reportedly provided through the regime's Diyanet Center in Maryland, a registered U.S. 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.[255] Despite being an official arm of the Turkish government, the Maryland Diyanet's contribution, routed through an American nonprofit organization, appears to circumvent the federal government's reporting requirements on foreign gifts for higher education institutions.

Ali Erbas was not the only Turkish regime official to spend time with Georgetown officials. In 2004, the Diyanet president, Ali Bardakoğlu, visited the ACMCU at Georgetown,[256] and in 2010 the Turkish Foreign Minister gave a speech at the university.[257]

Meanwhile, Georgetown's Turkish Students Association has worked with the Turkish embassy, hosting events with the ambassador.[258] In August 2016, the student association hosted a panel discussion at Georgetown to discuss the July coup attempt in Turkey. Turkish and Qatari media covered the event, at which the regime's dubious narrative about the coup plotters was presented.[259] Speakers praised the "people's resistance" to the alleged coup, with one panelist even declaring that he had "grabbed a knife" and ventured out on the streets.[260]

But regime collaboration is deeper than visits from foreign officials of an authoritarian state. A Turkish government website notes, in 2019, that an event in D.C. organized by the regime's Office of the Presidency was moderated by Georgetown's Brenda Shaffer, an adjunct professor at the university's Center for Eurasian, Russian, and East European Studies. The event featured several leading regime figures who attacked American support for Kurdish organizations in the Middle East, among other regime talking points.[261]

From 2016 to 2018, İbrahim Kalın served as a fellow at the ACMCU,[262] while also working as President Erdoğan's presidential spokesperson. Today, Kalın runs Turkey's intelligence agency MIT.[263] Kalın is a graduate of Malaysia's International Islamic University Malaysia, a close partner

Kalın also established and chaired the SETA Foundation, a major Turkish regime entity accused of working to censor criticism of Islamism in Europe.[265] SETA's Washington, D.C., office has run multiple events with Georgetown professors.[266] Kalın's colleague at ACMCU, Farid Hafez, is a former SETA official, previously editing its annual "European Islamophobia Report," produced with the backing of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Turkish officials, including representatives of Erdoğan himself, attend and speak at the annual reports' launch events.[267] Farid Hafez appears particularly appreciated by the Turkish regime, appearing at conferences alongside top AKP officials. [268]

Center for Islam and Global Affairs

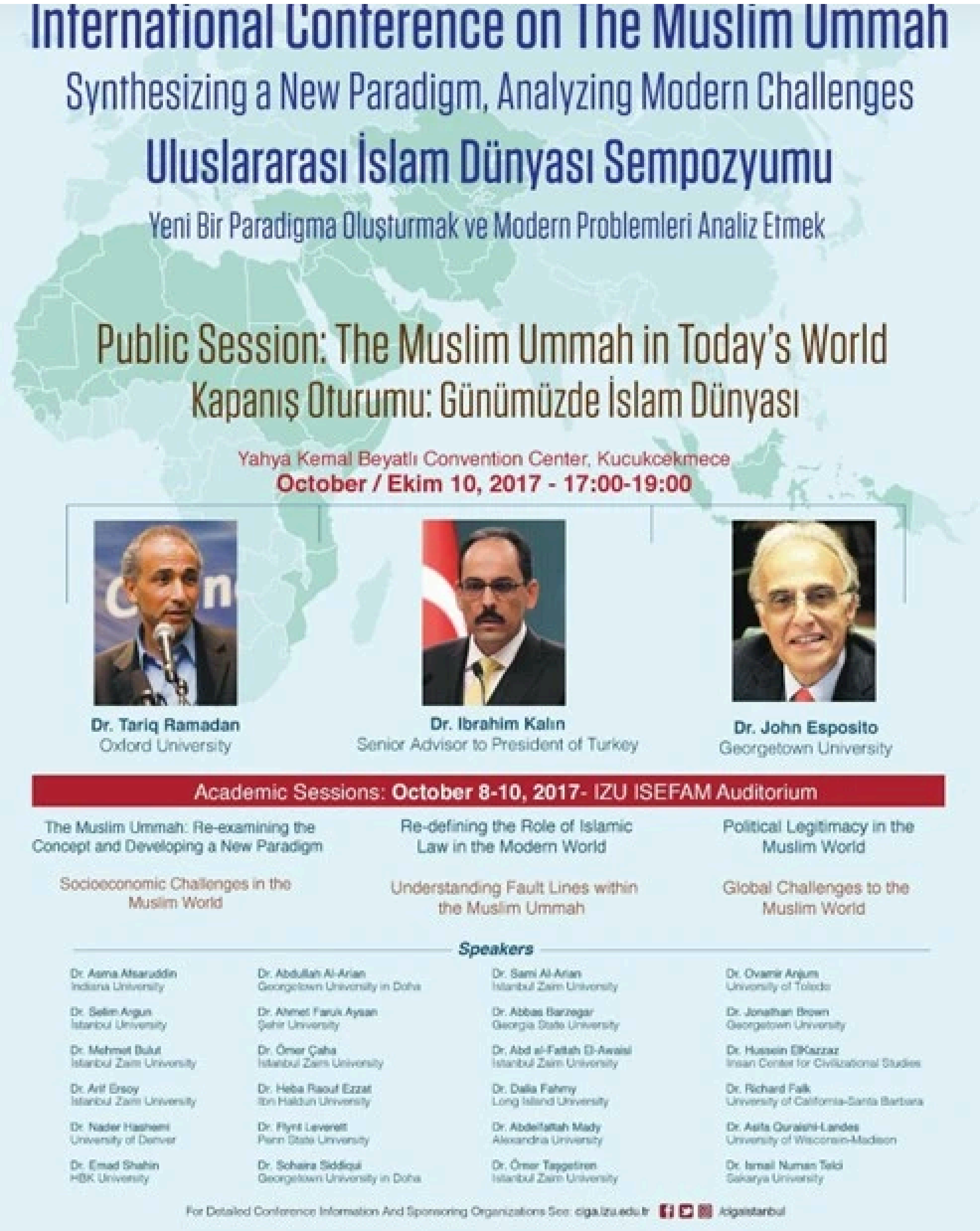
In 2015, following Al-Arian's deportation from the United States, the Turkish regime appeared to welcome him. Purportedly, President "Erdoğan helped him settle in Turkey." Analyst Abdullah Bozkurt, writing at *Nordic Monitor*, explains that the Turkish regime "secured a position" for Al-Arian at the Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University in Istanbul, which was "set up by the Islamist foundation İlim Yayma Vakfı."[269]

Two years later, Al-Arian established the Center for Islam and Global Affairs at the university. The Center for Islam and Global Affairs serves as an important institution for the regime, especially in its efforts to influence and coordinate Islamist activity in the West and to manipulate Western academia and media. In Turkish media, Al-Arian described the role of the Center for Islam and Global Affairs as serving "at the forefront of any real reform within the Muslim world. … The best way is to engage as many scholars outside as possible both within and outside the Muslim world."[270]

Furthermore, the Center for Islam and Global Affairs today is also a key platform for the work of both the ACMCU and Safa. The Center for Islam and Global Affairs marries Western academics with extremists and terrorists. Its most recent conference, held in October, featured prominent professors Joseph Massad of Columbia University, John Quigley of Ohio State University, and Ilan Pappé of the U.K's Exeter University, alongside senior Hamas official Osama Hamdan (billed as a "representative of

Marandi, Kremlin-aligned propagandist Max Blumenthal, and leading Islamist clerics and activists from all across the Middle East.[272]

Over the years, the Center for Islam and Global Affairs has hosted dozens of events and conferences, bringing prominent Western Islamists and Georgetown academics to Turkey to share platforms with high-ranking Turkish regime officials, alongside Malaysian and Qatari Islamists. In fact, with just a few exceptions, most Center for Islam and Global Affairs conferences and a significant number of its smaller events feature senior staff at the ACMCU and other Georgetown staff as speakers.[273]



International Conference on The Muslim Ummah

Synthesizing a New Paradigm, Analyzing Modern Challenges

Uluslararası İslam Dünyası Sempozyumu

Yeni Bir Paradigma Oluşturmak ve Modern Problemleri Analiz Etmek

Public Session: The Muslim Ummah in Today's World

Kapanış Oturumu: Günümüzde İslam Dünyası

Yahya Kemal Beyatlı Convention Center, Kucukcekmece

October / Ekim 10, 2017 - 17:00-19:00

Dr. Tariq Ramadan
Oxford University

Dr. Ibrahim Kalın
Senior Advisor to President of Turkey

Dr. John Esposito
Georgetown University

Academic Sessions: **October 8-10, 2017**- IZU ISEFAM Auditorium

The Muslim Ummah: Re-examining the Concept and Developing a New Paradigm

Re-defining the Role of Islamic Law in the Modern World

Political Legitimacy in the Muslim World

Socioeconomic Challenges in the Muslim World

Understanding Fault Lines within the Muslim Ummah

Global Challenges to the Muslim World

Speakers

Dr. Asma Afsaruddin
Indiana University

Dr. Selim Argun
İstanbul University

Dr. Mehmet Bulut
İstanbul Zaim University

Dr. Arif Ersoy
İstanbul Zaim University

Dr. Nader Hashemi
University of Denver

Dr. Emad Shahin
HBK University

Dr. Abdullah Al-Arian
Georgetown University in Doha

Dr. Ahmet Faruk Aysan
Şehir University

Dr. Ömer Çaha
İstanbul Zaim University

Dr. Heba Raouf Ezzat
Ibn Haldun University

Dr. Flynt Leverett
Penn State University

Dr. Sohaira Siddiqui
Georgetown University in Doha

Dr. Sami Al-Arian
İstanbul Zaim University

Dr. Abbas Barzegar
Georgia State University

Dr. Abd al-Fattah El-Awaisi
İstanbul Zaim University

Dr. Dalia Fahmy
Long Island University

Dr. Abdelfattah Mady
Alexandria University

Dr. Ömer Taşgetiren
İstanbul Zaim University

Dr. Ovamir Anjum
University of Toledo

Dr. Jonathan Brown
Georgetown University

Dr. Hussein ElKazzaz
Insan Center for Civilizational Studies

Dr. Richard Falk
University of California-Santa Barbara

Dr. Asifa Quraishi-Landes
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Dr. Ismail Numan Telci
Sakarya University

For Detailed Conference Information And Sponsoring Organizations See: ciga.izu.edu.tr /cigaistanbul

An event poster for a joint CIGA-ACMCU event, also sponsored by Turkish and Qatari regime institutions. Speakers included Turkish regime official and ACMCU fellow Ibrahim Kalin, ACMCU founder John Esposito, Georgetown's Abdullah Al-Arian, deported terror financier Sami Al-Arian and several prominent Islamist academics and other ACMCU staff.

In December 2020, for instance, the Center for Islam and Global Affairs hosted its "Fourth International Conference on Governance and Political Authority in the Muslim World." The conference was jointly organized with the College of Islamic Studies at Qatar's Hamad Bin Khalifa University.[274] The College of Islamic Studies and Hamad Bin Khalifa University sent a number of the International Islamic University Malaysia, and former director of the Safa Network's IIIT.[275] In fact, Emad Shahin has not just served as a senior fellow at Georgetown University and employee of a Qatari regime institution, but is also a senior fellow at the Center for Islam and Global Affairs.[276]

The Qatari delegation was joined by the SAFA Network's Anwar Ibrahim, soon to be elected prime minister of Malaysia; and Necmeddin Bilal Erdoğan, the son of President Erdoğan and an official of CIGA's parent organization. Necmeddin opened the conference.

Georgetown also provided speakers: Abdullah Al-Arian, Sami Al-Arian's son, as well as Jonathan Brown, the top academic at ACMCU and Sami Al-Arian's son-in-law. This global, intimate network of academics and radicals was supplemented by additional Georgetown faculty, including John Esposito, as well as Nader Hashemi, a University of Denver academic who would subsequently become an ACMCU fellow after an antisemitism scandal.[277] Other Islamists from around the world also attended, including Iranian regime operatives, senior Muslim Brotherhood leaders, and Western Islamists such Hafsa Kanjwal,[278] who runs Stand With Kashmir, a group openly dedicated to supporting Kashmir jihadists.[279]

In a survey of the speakers and sponsoring organizations of about 40 Center for Islam and Global Affairs events, this report found repeated involvement of leaders at the intersection of the Center for Islam and Global Affairs, Qatar and Turkey.

In total, our research found ten faculty members at the ACMCU who have appeared repeatedly at Center for Islam and Global Affairs events. We uncovered a further thirty-two instances of Georgetown's ACMCU either co-sponsoring Center for Islam and Global Affairs conferences or current and former faculty from Georgetown's D.C. and Doha campus speaking at Center for Islam and Global Affairs events, almost always sharing a platform with a wide array of Islamists and various other violent and nonviolent extremists, as well as various Qatari, Malaysian and Turkish Islamist academics and dignitaries.

of his links to a designated terrorist organization, and instead claiming, speciously, that Al-Arian had been "pursued by the U.S. government on various charges, resulting in a prolonged legal battle over which he eventually prevailed."[280]

Malaysia

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim has enjoyed a longstanding relationship with Georgetown. Currently serving as a fellow at the ACMCU, Ibrahim was introduced to John Esposito as an "ambassador" for the ACMCU at the center's beginning in the 1990s. Ibrahim has also served in other Georgetown faculty positions while serving in both government and opposition political roles in Malaysia.[281] Most importantly, Ibrahim also serves a leading founder of the Safa Network, leading the IIIT, which, as detailed above, funds Georgetown and its Bridge Initiative.

Ibrahim's radical roots lie with Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia, translated as "Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia," an Islamist party he co-founded in 1971.[282] Ibrahim has long consorted openly with prominent extremist leaders, including the late Yusuf Al-Qaradawi. He has broadcast the support he has received from Tunisian Islamist idealogue Rached Ghannouchi, whom he praises for helping to "mobilize the struggle." On November 27, 2024, Anwar Ibrahim posted a video of himself on the social media platform X, speaking with the late Ismail Haniyeh, leader of the terrorist group Hamas. Speaking in English, Ibrahim states that his own election victory is also a victory for the "Palestinians and the ummah" and pledged to "work together, inshallah, to redeem the lost image and also role of the ummah."[283] Ibrahim subsequently also spoke to Hamas's political leader Khaled Meshal, former chairman of the Hamas Political Bureau.[284] Reuters reported that "Anwar, who met Haniyeh in Qatar in May, has said he has good relations with the Hamas political leadership."[285]

In a 2020 photo, ACMCU fellow, Safa Network founder and Malaysian politician Anwar Ibrahim, embraces Ismail Haniyeh, leader of the terror group Hamas.

In a piece about Anwar Ibrahim, Nader Hashemi, director at the ACMCU, wrote that his colleague, ACMCU founder John Esposito, has known Ibrahim since the early 1970s.[286] Esposito and Voll even produced a short chapter about Ibrahim as part of a book profiling "Makers of Contemporary Islam."[287]

Notably, the Safa Network has served as a consistent platform for Ibrahim's political and ideological career. The IIIT's Far-Eastern operations have been used to launch Ibrahim's political manifestos and organize his policy conferences, both while serving in opposition and in government, including as prime minister.[288]

A considerable proportion of the Safa Network's Eastern operations are conducted through the International Islamic University Malaysia, where Ibrahim previously served as president and, Malaysian commentators note, "supported" it "from its very inception."[289] Indeed, the International Islamic University Malaysia serves as a sister organization to the IIIT and is a key outpost for Safa in the Far East. Both IIIT and the International Islamic University Malaysia were established and developed by ideologue, Esposito's teacher and co-founder of the IIIT.[290] While Safa's AbuSulayman led the International Islamic University Malaysia, Esposito is reported to have "met him often."[291]

Today, Osman Bin Bakar, the current rector of the International Islamic University Malaysia, a fellow at the ACMCU and Safa-involved academic, declares that "Islamization of Knowledge is central to the International Islamic University Malaysia's mission."[292]

The IIIT operates a significant department at the International Islamic University Malaysia, provides the university with scholarships, and considers the Malaysian outpost a "long-standing" partner.[293] The International Islamic University Malaysia has even published articles portraying Ibrahim's rise as a product of the International Islamic University Malaysia and the IIIT's partnership, writing that should Ibrahim be elected, "the army and civilians in the constituency are bound to gain from the same trajectory with which the International Islamic University Malaysia and the IIIT in Malaysia once handsomely gained."[294] The same International Islamic University Malaysia article also contends that "revivalist Islam" was advanced by the "works of [Georgetown's] John Voll or John Esposito, both of whom were known to Anwar … their scholarships had struck a chord with Muslims and many the world over."[295] Safa and Georgetown are contributing forces in a tightly knit network underpinning the most powerful Islamist forces in Malaysia.

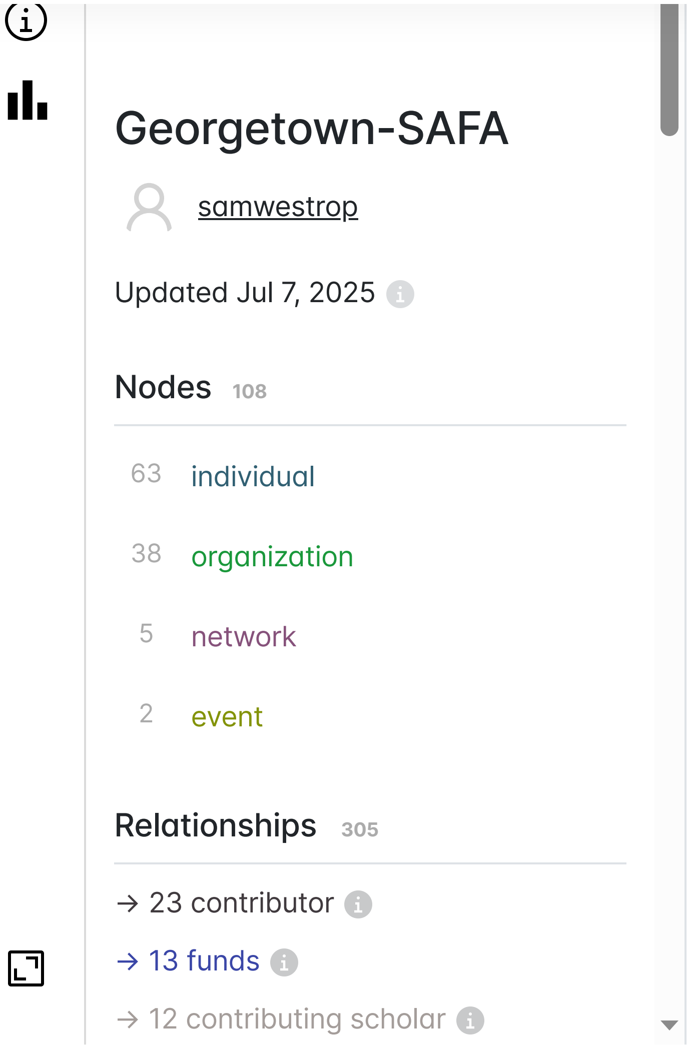
John Esposito has praised the late Safa leader and the IIIT founder, Jamal Barzinji, for his "leadership in establishing" the ACMCU at Georgetown. Barzinji also served as "dean of the Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences" at the International Islamic University Malaysia.[296] Indeed, the International Islamic University Malaysia shares a significant number of faculty members with Georgetown. For example, Osman Bakar, a fellow at the ACMCU, is the rector of the International Islamic University Malaysia.[297] He served as a leading official at the ACMCU, serving on its "academic council."[298] He is also an advisor to the Qatar Foundation, which hosts Georgetown's campus in Qatar, and he is involved with the Safa Network's IIIT.[299]

International Islamic University Malaysia's "decision to not become a secular university and now they managed to achieve it with International Institute of Islamic Thought support."[300] ACMCU official Jonathan Brown and other Georgetown faculty studied under Hassan at Georgetown.[301]

Louay Safi, former head of Safa's IIIT and today a leading academic at Qatar's Hamad Bin Khalifa University, previously worked as the dean of research at the International Islamic University Malaysia.[302] Imtiyaz Yusuf, former fellow at the ACMCU, is closely involved with the Safa Network in the United States, and ran the "Islamization of Knowledge Programme" at the International Islamic University Malaysia's Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilisation (ISTAC).[303] ISTAC appears to function as a component of Safa and a sister organization to IIIT, frequently cooperating with Safa officials and institutions, such as a 2025 event at ISTAC featuring Safa's Muna AbuSulayman and Yaqub Mirza.[304]

Ibrahim Kalin, the IIIT-linked[305] head of the Turkish intelligence agency, former advisor to President Erdoğan, and former fellow at the ACMCU, is a graduate of the International Islamic University Malaysia.[306] And Nader Hashemi, director at the ACMCU, is a loud and public supporter of Islamism in Malaysia, remarking upon the election of notoriously antisemitic politician Mahathir Mohamad in 2018. "First we take Malaysia, then we take down the other authoritarian regimes that are destroying our world, inshallah," he said.[307]

Chart and Data



Georgetown-SAFA

samwestrop

Updated Jul 7, 2025

Nodes 108

63	individual
38	organization
5	network
2	event

Relationships 305

→ 23 contributor

→ 13 funds

→ 12 contributing scholar

Implications and Significance

Georgetown's School of Foreign Service and its ACMCU wield immense influence. Consistently ranked among the world's top institutions for international relations,[308] the School of Foreign Service claims to have more graduates serving as U.S. ambassadors and diplomats than any other university.[309]

The ACMCU claims "many graduates begin influential careers in State Departments around the world."[310] Its faculty members have "spoken at venues around the world and served as consultants to government leaders, diplomats, policymakers, and the media."[311] The center engages current government staff through specialized programs and disseminates research to policymakers, shaping legislative discussion and policy changes. Notably, in 2005—the year the ACMCU received a $20

Indeed, Georgetown and its ACMCU guide U.S. intelligence and military policy and behavior. Former Georgetown President John DeGioia has told Congress: "Our scholars have been called upon not only by the State Department, as you note, but also by Defense, Homeland Security, and FBI officials, as well as governments and their agencies in Europe and Asia. In fact, several high-ranking U.S. military officials, prior to assuming roles with the Multi-National Force in Iraq, have sought out faculty with the Center for their expertise on the region."[313]

John Voll, a prominent academic affiliated with the ACMCU, highlighted the center's strategic location, stating that "few colleges are located near cities like Washington, D.C., which provide rich resources from the U.S. government and international leaders."[314] As for Georgetown's campus in Doha, a Georgetown faculty member has written: "For many U.S. diplomats, Georgetown's School of Foreign Service in Qatar provides ideal training for the State Department."[315]

ACMCU founder John Esposito appeared to consider higher education crucial to training the next generation of global Islamist leaders. Pakistani Islamist Ghulam Nabi Fai recently recounted a speech by Esposito at Temple University in Philadelphia in 1994. Fai writes: "My challenge to the Muslim students of Temple University is, Professor Esposito said, to produce three more intellectuals within the next ten years like Dr. Hassan Turabi, Professor Khurshid Ahmed, and Anwar Ibrahim. When I met Professor Esposito ten years later in 1995 at the ISNA Convention, which was held at Columbus, Ohio, he still remembered that challenge and told me that challenge still stands."[316]

It seems that the Safa Network, an expansive group of over 100 interconnected organizations established and run by a powerful collection of Islamist thinkers and activists, developed and funded the ACMCU to advance this agenda.

As illustrated by hundreds of data points discussed above, the ACMCU depends on Safa. As noted by Abubaker Alshingeiti: "Without the intervention of [SAFA leader] Dr. Jamal [Barzinji], this Center for Christian-Muslim Understanding would have been extinct by now."[317] Under the influence of Safa, the ACMCU has helped shape Islamic studies around the world.

Muslim-majority country, works to impose ideas developed by Safa and the ACMCU in Virginia and D.C. Such influence is circular. Ibrahim’s most important institution, the International Islamic University Malaysia, is not only run by Safa, but trains students and academics who go on to study and work at the ACMCU.

In Turkey, Safa affiliates, such as terror financier Sami Al-Arian, advise government and academics on Islamic and Middle Eastern studies, with the help of visiting ACMCU and Georgetown academics, which include his relatives. In Qatar, Safa and ACMCU staff manage and depend on vital regime institutions such as the Qatar Foundation and its College of Islamic Studies, which, in turn, shape and fund Middle East studies in America and Europe, while educating future State Department employees in Doha, through Georgetown’s campus.

Competing Muslim forces are aware of Georgetown’s role. In 2017, Saudi Arabia’s blockade of Qatar included a demand for Qatar to close the Georgetown School of Foreign Service campus in Doha. This was part of broader demands targeting Qatar’s support for Islamist groups and its influence in regional politics. The blockade also sought the shutdown of *Al Jazeera*, a frequent platform for ACMCU academics, and an employer of ACMCU and Safa’s staff and graduates.

The Safa Network’s influence over Georgetown University is unprecedented. That such a major institution on the East Coast could be so blindly dependent on a radical network once closely involved in terror finance, and today pivotal to the advance of theocratic ideals that sit in fundamental opposition to American democracy, indicates a terrible failing by an educational institution ostensibly dedicated to objectivity and truth.

Today, an Islamist network with ties to radical regimes around the world, keeps a large chunk of one of America’s leading universities under its thumb, with terrible consequences at the highest levels of policy and education. This is a profound challenge to the integrity of Western institutions and their foundational principles. Georgetown must act on this information. The Department of Justice should investigate the potential abuse of foreign agent laws. Law enforcement should begin, once again, to study the terror ties of the Safa Network. The Department of Education should investigate the

Policy Recommendations

Stopping 501(c) Abuse

The 501(c) system affords foreign actors an obvious means to circumvent Section 117 of the Higher Education Act, which requires higher education institutions receiving federal financial assistance to report foreign gifts and contracts. Foreign benefactors, whether linked to terrorist organizations or hostile governments, only need to establish or funnel money through a 501(c) organization for any donation to a university to become a domestic grant rather than a foreign gift, and thus not subject to reporting requirements. The Turkish regime, for example, funneled money to Georgetown through the regime-controlled Diyanet Center, a U.S. 501(c); the university was not required to report this gift through Section 117.

Statutory changes can limit extremist influence over higher education institutions. Possible legislative changes could include:

1. Any higher education institution receiving federal financial assistance must publish a full list of all donors and financial partners, including details of any grant, contract or loan.
2. Amend the Higher Education Act to mandate that all higher education institutions disclose reporting of any grant from a 501(c) benefactor maintaining foreign offices or foreign bank accounts, or whose board includes foreign trustees.
3. Amend federal and nonprofit laws to prohibit domestic 501(c) organizations from acting as intermediaries for foreign-controlled entities to funnel funds into U.S. institutions, especially when linked to authoritarian regimes or designated terrorist organizations.

Reforming Section 117

Currently, Section 117 demands disclosure of any gift over $250,000. The ultimate beneficiary of these gifts, as well as the names and addresses of the original donor, are not published, following a policy change implemented on June 22, 2020. Not only is the disclosure dollar threshold too high, but the reporting requirements are useless without full details of a gift or contract's purpose.

2. Congress should pass the Defending Education Transparency and Ending Rogue Regimes Engaging in Nefarious Transactions (DETERRENT) Act, which will reduce the reporting threshold to $0 for "countries of concern" and to $50,000 for all other states. The DETERRENT Act also imposes requirements on individual faculty members to disclose foreign funding links and on institutions to disclose foreign investments.

Enforcing the Law

As shown in this report, academics employed by American higher education institutions have traveled abroad to meet with and speak alongside representatives and supporters of foreign terrorist organizations responsible for the murder of American citizens. In 2010, the Supreme Court clarified that speech and advocacy activities that otherwise might be protected under the First Amendment still could constitute material support if coordinated with or under the direction of designated terrorist organizations.[318]

The Department of Justice must consider:

- The pursuit of material support cases against American activist-academics that exchange expertise on joint platforms with representatives of designated terrorist organizations.
- Georgetown staff and faculty appear to be acting in coordination with foreign governments in Qatar, Turkey, and Malaysia. Several ACMCU staff aim to sway public opinion in favor of these regimes, while also working to influence public policy. These faculty members thus should be subject to Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) investigations.
- Authorize the Department of Justice to pursue criminal penalties for universities and 501(c) organizations that submit materially false or incomplete disclosures under Section 117 or IRS filings.

Expanding the Law

Section 1286 of the 2019 National Defense Authorization Act mandates the Department of Defense to publish a list of foreign institutions engaged in problematic activities. This list informs vetting, funding and recruitment decisions by federal agencies and beneficiaries of federal monies.

(home of the Center for Islam and Global Affairs) to its “list of foreign institutions engaging in problematic activity.”

Section 1062 of the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), meanwhile, states that the Defense Department cannot fund U.S. higher education institutions hosting a Confucius Institute without an explicit waiver.

- This interdiction should be expanded to include the Qatar Foundation, International Islamic University Malaysia and Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University.

Toughening Visa Vetting

The Trump administration has shown some interest in pursuing academics and students in the United States on non-immigrant visas who engage in advocacy for foreign terrorist organizations. Research for this report even underpinned one of those arrests.

- Specific screening measures must be introduced that identify any support by visa applicants for designated terrorist organizations.

Reviving Counterterrorism Investigations

The Safa Network openly partnered with Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad operatives. Evidence from the investigations into Sami Al-Arian and his WISE organization indicates Safa’s financial involvement as well.

- The FBI and IRS must revive Operation Green Quest and investigate the significant involvement between the Safa Network and foreign terrorist organizations and foreign states.

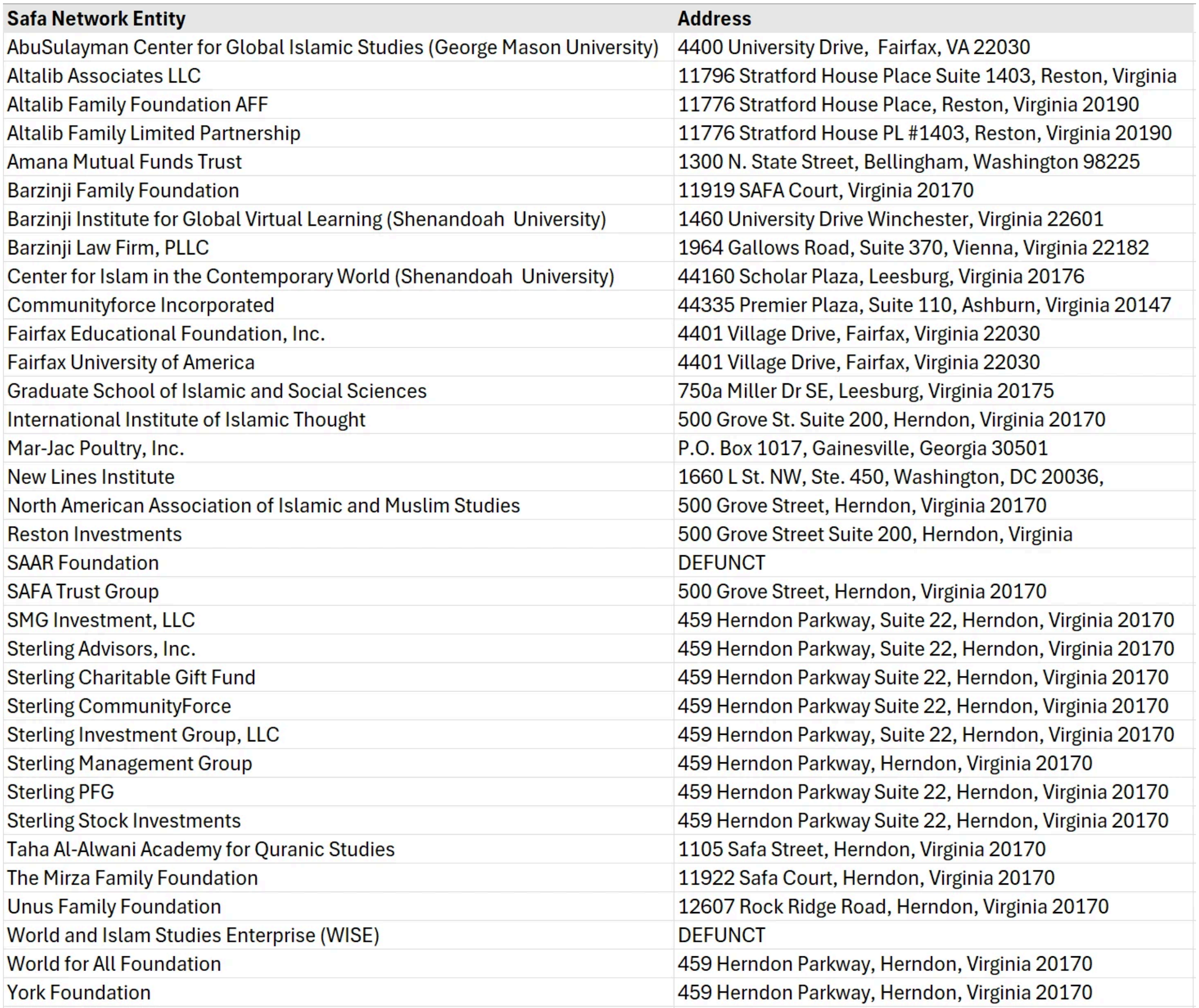
Interagency Task Force

The Safa Network’s reach extends beyond Georgetown. It funds and operate within other higher education institutions.

- Establish a federal watchlist of foreign academic institutions and individuals linked to terror financing or extremist ideologies to guide visa approvals, academic collaboration, and federal funding decisions.

Appendix I: Safa Network Organizations Subset

Over 150 for-profit and non-profit entities are involved in the Safa Network. We believe that these 33 are (or have been) among the most prominent.



Safa Network Entity	Address
AbuSulayman Center for Global Islamic Studies (George Mason University)	4400 University Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030
Altalib Associates LLC	11796 Stratford House Place Suite 1403, Reston, Virginia
Altalib Family Foundation AFF	11776 Stratford House Place, Reston, Virginia 20190
Altalib Family Limited Partnership	11776 Stratford House PL #1403, Reston, Virginia 20190
Amana Mutual Funds Trust	1300 N. State Street, Bellingham, Washington 98225
Barzinji Family Foundation	11919 SAFA Court, Virginia 20170
Barzinji Institute for Global Virtual Learning (Shenandoah University)	1460 University Drive Winchester, Virginia 22601
Barzinji Law Firm, PLLC	1964 Gallows Road, Suite 370, Vienna, Virginia 22182
Center for Islam in the Contemporary World (Shenandoah University)	44160 Scholar Plaza, Leesburg, Virginia 20176
Communityforce Incorporated	44335 Premier Plaza, Suite 110, Ashburn, Virginia 20147
Fairfax Educational Foundation, Inc.	4401 Village Drive, Fairfax, Virginia 22030
Fairfax University of America	4401 Village Drive, Fairfax, Virginia 22030
Graduate School of Islamic and Social Sciences	750a Miller Dr SE, Leesburg, Virginia 20175
International Institute of Islamic Thought	500 Grove St. Suite 200, Herndon, Virginia 20170
Mar-Jac Poultry, Inc.	P.O. Box 1017, Gainesville, Georgia 30501
New Lines Institute	1660 L St. NW, Ste. 450, Washington, DC 20036,
North American Association of Islamic and Muslim Studies	500 Grove Street, Herndon, Virginia 20170
Reston Investments	500 Grove Street Suite 200, Herndon, Virginia
SAAR Foundation	DEFUNCT
SAFA Trust Group	500 Grove Street, Herndon, Virginia 20170
SMG Investment, LLC	459 Herndon Parkway, Suite 22, Herndon, Virginia 20170
Sterling Advisors, Inc.	459 Herndon Parkway, Suite 22, Herndon, Virginia 20170
Sterling Charitable Gift Fund	459 Herndon Parkway Suite 22, Herndon, Virginia 20170
Sterling CommunityForce	459 Herndon Parkway Suite 22, Herndon, Virginia 20170
Sterling Investment Group, LLC	459 Herndon Parkway, Suite 22, Herndon, Virginia 20170
Sterling Management Group	459 Herndon Parkway, Herndon, Virginia 20170
Sterling PFG	459 Herndon Parkway Suite 22, Herndon, Virginia 20170
Sterling Stock Investments	459 Herndon Parkway Suite 22, Herndon, Virginia 20170
Taha Al-Alwani Academy for Quranic Studies	1105 Safa Street, Herndon, Virginia 20170
The Mirza Family Foundation	11922 Safa Court, Herndon, Virginia 20170
Unus Family Foundation	12607 Rock Ridge Road, Herndon, Virginia 20170
World and Islam Studies Enterprise (WISE)	DEFUNCT
World for All Foundation	459 Herndon Parkway, Herndon, Virginia 20170
York Foundation	459 Herndon Parkway, Herndon, Virginia 20170

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